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## Testing Virginity in Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus

Towards the end of the life of Aesop, probably written in the first century CE, a surprising, bawdy tale appears. I give the version here preserved in Vita W chapter 131, also collected as *fabula* 386.<sup>1</sup>

γυνή τις εἶχε θυγατέρα παρθένον μωράν. πάντοτε οὖν ἤρχετο τὴν θυγατέρα νοῦν ἔχειν. εὐχομένης δὲ αὐτῆς παρρησίᾳ ἡ παρθένος ἤκουσε καὶ τὸν λόγον κατέσχε. μεθ' ἡμέρας δὲ τινὰς σὺν τῇ μητρὶ εἰς ἀγρὸν ἐξελθοῦσα καὶ τῆς προαυλίου προκύψασα θύρας, εἶδεν ὄνον θήλειαν ὑπὸ ἀνθρώπου βιαζομένην. καὶ ποσελθοῦσα τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ εἶπε «τί ποιεῖς;» ὁ δὲ φησι «νοῦν αὐτῇ ἐντίθημι.» ἀνανμνησθεῖσα δὲ ἡ μωρὰ ὅτι καθ' ἐκάστην ἡ μήτηρ αὐτῆς νοῦν αὐτὴν ἔχειν ἤρχετο, παρεκάλει λέγουσα, «ἔνθες, ἄνθρωπε, κάμοι νοῦν. καὶ ἡ μήτηρ μου πολὺ σοι πρὸς τοῦτο εὐχαριστήσῃ.» ὁ δὲ ὑπακούσας, καταλιπὼν τὴν ὄνον διεπαρθενεύσατο αὐτήν. ἡ δὲ ἀναβᾶσα πρὸς τὴν μητέρα εἶπεν «αἰδοῦ, μήτηρ, κατὰ τὴν εὐχὴν σου νοῦν ἔλαβον.» ἡ δὲ μήτηρ αὐτῆς φησιν «ἐπηκουσάν μου τῶν εὐχῶν οἱ θεοί.» ἡ μωρὰ ἔφη «ναὶ μήτηρ.» «καὶ πῶς,» φησιν, «οἶδας, τέκνον;» ἡ δὲ εἶπεν «ὁ τοῦτόν μοι ἐνθεῖς μακρὸν πυρρὸν νευρῶδες ἔσω καὶ ἔξω ἐντρέχον ἐνέβαλέ μοι, κἀγὼ ἑτερπόμεν.» ἡ δὲ μήτηρ ἀκούσασα ἔφη, «ὦ τέκνον, ἀπώλεσας καὶ ὃν πρῶτον εἶχες νοῦν.»

A certain woman had a stupid unmarried (virgin) daughter. Every day, therefore, she prayed that her daughter would get some sense. The young woman heard her praying openly, and remembered her words. After some days, having come out into a field with her mother and having peeked through the gates of the forecourt, she saw a female ass getting screwed by a man. She approached the man, and said, 'What are you doing?' And he said, 'I'm putting some sense into her.' The stupid girl, remembering that every day her mother prayed that she would get some sense, called out to him, saying, 'Put some sense in me, too, sir. Indeed my mother will be very pleased with you for this.' He, having heard this, left his ass and took her virginity. Returning to her mother, she said, 'Look, mother, I have got some sense just as you prayed.' Her mother said, 'The gods have heard my prayers.' The foolish girl, 'Yes mother.' 'And how,' she said, 'do you know, child?' She said, 'He put it [sense] in me, by putting a large reddish tendon, which ran in and out, into me; and I enjoyed it.' And her mother, hearing this, said, 'Child, you have lost even what sense you had before.'

This story is remarkable in several respects. Its humor derives from the young woman's failure to understand the metaphor employed by the shepherd, in which an act of sex (itself risqué bestiality) is likened to education.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, she conflates metaphorical and literal senses of 'putting in,' so that it makes a joke out of the physical act of the man putting his sexual organ into her body.<sup>3</sup> The young woman's enjoyment of sex is recorded — a rare event in any ancient

text — though this is part of the joke, since what she enjoyed was, from her mother's point of view, the most tragic aspect of her experience.<sup>4</sup> What is even more interesting about the joke, and most craftily manipulated, is the social valence of the girl's virginity and its loss.

Until the last sentence of the story, all the verbs in the story denote actions of gain: the mother prays that her daughter will gain *noos*, sense, the man tells the daughter that he is putting sense into the ass, the daughter asks to have sense put into her, the man puts a reddish organ into her body. The daughter, with characteristic failure of understanding, assumes that all has been to her profit. But the mother realizes that rather than having gained sense, her daughter has lost something. In a central moment of reversal, her mother declares that she has lost exactly that which she hoped to gain — *noos*, or sense. But this is not literally what she means; rather, the mother means that her daughter has proven her stupidity because she did not realize that by having sex with the shepherd she has lost something else, namely her virginity. The story is surprisingly clear on this point: the daughter is identified as a *parthenos* in the first line, a word that specifically means a woman who is not currently married and has not had children.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, when the man has sex with the daughter, the verb used is *diapartheneuo*, a relatively rare verb that appears to mean 'to deflower', in the sense of a first sexual act for the woman.<sup>6</sup>

The story brings out, then, the peculiar way in which virginity works: virginity is a thing, but a thing that exists only negatively, as a lack of experience. The young foolish girl in the story is blissfully unaware of the facts of sex, and has no thought for the preciousness of maintaining a state of sexual innocence. Her only motivation, planted by her mother's well-meaning prayers, is to gain knowledge. She does indeed gain this knowledge, in a manner of speaking; she does have 'sense put into her' not in the way that the ass does, but in gaining an awareness of the pleasure of sex. But for her, as a *parthenos*, this apparent gain turns to loss; it turns out that her lack of this specific knowledge, of this manifestly pleasurable act, was more valuable than its gain. Virginity, paradoxically, is never so keenly present as when it is lost.

As was famously pointed out by Foucault in the last pages of the last volume of his *History of Sexuality*, the ancient novels are also curiously interested in the virginity of their

young romantic heroines (though this position has needed some modification; see below).<sup>7</sup> He postulated in these novels the development of a new erotics, which was characterized by ‘the existence of a ‘heterosexual’ relation marked by a male-female polarity, the insistence on an abstention that is modeled much more on virginal integrity than on the political and virile domination of desires; and finally, the fulfillment and reward of this purity in a union that has the form and value of a spiritual marriage.’<sup>8</sup> Where Foucault takes virginity as necessarily linked to the form of the romantic novel, however, the story from Aesop’s life is entirely without romance. This is sex, pure and simple, and the daughter’s loss of virginity is either tragic (from her mother’s perspective) or funny (from the implied reader’s perspective), but there is no passion here, no erotics leading to any sort of union. This distinction leads me to the feature of the ancient romance ‘novels’ that I wish to explore in this paper, namely the curious dependence of Romance on virginity itself.<sup>9</sup>

Jack Winkler posed an important, and still unanswered, question more than 25 years ago. In an article titled ‘The Invention of Romance,’ he pointed out that, previous to the long prose narratives that we have come to call the ancient ‘novels,’ Greek literature showed almost no sign of love (*erōs*) as a positive force leading to marriage. Instead, as Winkler says, ‘In most of the narratives the mere mention of *erōs* is already a signal to the audience of peril, danger, and an unhappy ending.’<sup>10</sup> The question, then, is how did this burgeoning form of literature, which Winkler characterized as ‘a fantasy of the significantly impossible,’ become first, a standard literary form, and eventually, a social norm?<sup>11</sup> I do not have an answer to this intriguing question, critical though it is; rather, I want to ask, and in some part to answer, a related question: how is it that the concept of *virginity* functions within the significantly impossible fantasy that is Romance? That is, why is it that the heroine (and sometimes, in some ways, the hero) of the ancient novels must remain a virgin until the narrative’s end? I do not intend, as Foucault did, to tie this innovation to the development of a new erotics in the social realm.<sup>12</sup> Rather, I plan to show how a fascination with the heroine’s virginity both drives the plot of Romance and mirrors its mode of narrative exposition. Indeed, the heroine’s lack of knowledge of sexual matters, and

the continual testing of that state, mirrors the reader's continual and unresolved lack of knowledge about the heroine's virginity.<sup>13</sup>

### WHAT IS *PARTHENIA*?

As early as Sappho, the abstract noun *parthenia* ('virginity') appears as a thing that can only be lost once:

παρθενία, παρθενία, ποῖ με λίποισα ἀποΐχη;  
οὐκέτι ἤξω πρὸς σέ, οὐκέτι ἤξω.

Virginity, virginity, (*parthenia*) where are you going, leaving me?  
No longer will I come to you, no longer will I come.  
(Sappho *Frag.* 114)

This fragment of archaic poetry seems in line with our own notions of virginity, with the result that we may not notice how unusual it is. In fact, such an utterance is almost unique in archaic Greek poetry. Many texts from the archaic and classical periods demonstrate a concern with women's chastity and fidelity (typically referred to by the word *sophrosyne*, or 'temperance'), but very few support a notion of a woman's physical integrity as a thing which can only be taken once.<sup>14</sup> When we consider Sappho's suggestive fragment, moreover, we must admit that we know almost nothing of its context. Page suggests that it is part of an epithalamion, though the responsive structure (the second verse apparently being sung by a person or persons representing the voice of *parthenia* itself) is unique in our corpus of Sappho. Both lines have textual uncertainties, and the second, Page says '...is beyond hope of restoration, particularly since we cannot be certain what the metre was.'<sup>15</sup> In the context of Sappho's poetry, the fragment seems consistent with a number of poems that celebrate a young girl's innocence (105a) or lament its loss (105c) though neither of these specifies virginity. All that we can say with certainty is that in fragment 114 a speaker regrets the loss of her state of virginity, and views it as something that, once lost, cannot be regained.

Considerably more slippery than the noun *parthenia*, however, is the term *parthenos*, which has often been translated ‘virgin’. As Sissa and Loraux have both shown, there is a long tradition of children born to *parthenoi* beginning with Homer and continuing into the historical period.<sup>16</sup> The character of Creusa in Euripides’ *Ion* retains her status as *parthenos* even after having been raped by Apollo and having given birth.<sup>17</sup> These situations have led some commentators to argue that the term *parthenos* refers not to a personal state, but to a social status, namely that of being young, marriageable, and unmarried. As Sissa points out, however, there are several moments in Greek literature that argue against a purely sociological understanding of the term *parthenos*: Herodotus speaks of young women who are proven to be *pseudoparthenoi*, for example (4.180). He does so in describing the unusual marriage rituals of the Libyans, and he offers no elaboration on the term *pseudoparthenos*. Nonetheless, such instances suggest that being a *parthenos* is a personal status that one can simulate, that a young woman can hide the truth of her sexual experience.<sup>18</sup>

The idea of virginity as a personal state, however, should not be confused with the idea of it as a physical state, signified by the presence or absence of the hymen. In fact, as Sissa has argued at length, the ancient Greeks do not seem to be aware of the hymen, and when they speak of virginity as a physical state, they conceive of it as present in the *parthenos*’ entire body.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, as has been noted, Soranus provides us with the first historical explicit mention of the hymen, and he does so only to deny its existence.<sup>20</sup> As Morales points out, Seneca’s *Controversiae* 1.2, roughly contemporaneous with Achilles Tatius, argues for a concept of virginity which is not clearly tied to physical integrity. This hypothetical case contains a number of arguments regarding the suitability of a young woman for a priesthood; the woman, though never having had sex, has worked in a brothel. Several of the arguments put forth suggest that her status as a virgin has been compromised by her contiguity with the place of prostitution; Cestius Pius, for example argues that *iam te ut nemo violaverit, locus ipse violavit* (‘even if nobody raped you, the place itself did so’, Sen. *Cont.* 1.2.7).<sup>21</sup> To be a *parthenos*, then, is not purely a question of not having had sex, though it does seem to be constituted bodily.

Nonetheless, it is clear that some idea of virginity as a lack of sexual experience existed quite early in Greek culture, and that it is not merely a question of a woman being married or unmarried. Artemis and Athena both avoid sex, and not just marriage, in the myths surrounding their virginal status. Even to see these goddesses nude is an act fraught with peril for mortal heroes, since such acts of looking suggest possible sexual interaction. One presumes, moreover, that the numerous religious ceremonies that called for *parthenoi* at Athens are not defining a purely social status, but rather a social status that is the sign of a private state of being.<sup>22</sup> How, then, do we align these facts with the numerous stories of *parthenoi* who have sex and produce children out of wedlock? Sissa provides an answer that, as it turns out, works particularly well in considering the novels that I discuss below: ‘...the sexuality of a *parthenos* encountered one unbreakable limit: the discovery of its existence. This is not a minor point.’<sup>23</sup> In other words, the end of being a *parthenos* is not sex, or even pregnancy, but public knowledge of the act of sex.

The difficulty with this formulation is that it is not easy to tell if a woman has had sex or not, and this leads to considerable ambiguity. Virginity is securely identified only when lost, and then usually by the much later signs of advanced pregnancy. In a tantalizing passage dealing with Callisto after she has been raped, for example, Ovid mentions that signs of her new state were present – but that Diana, being inexperienced herself, did not recognize them:

sed silet et laesi dat signa rubore pudoris;  
et, nisi quod virgo est, poterat sentire Diana  
mille notis culpam; nymphae sensisse feruntur.

but she is quiet, and with her blush gives a sign of her wounded chastity;  
and, but that she is a virgin, Diana would have been able to recognize  
her fault by a thousand signs; the nymphs, they say, did recognize it.

(Ovid *Met.* 2.450-452)

With a typical sly wink, Ovid draws a distinction between the virginal Diana and the not-so-virginal nymphs. Whether or not one sees Callisto as a virgin, it turns out, depends precisely on one own’s state of sexual experience. Those who have had sex can recognize certain clear signs; what these signs are, however, Ovid does not specify. Moreover, even here it is not entirely clear

that it is lost virginity, rather than illicit sex, that Diana misses. Eventually Callisto will be found out, because she is pregnant; if she were not pregnant, would there be anything to find in her ‘wounded chastity’?<sup>24</sup> Here as often, virginity is not a physical state that can easily be proven, except in the kind of failure that results in children. Rather than think of virginity in terms of a ruptured membrane, then, we need to think of it in terms of knowledge: a woman ceases to be a *parthenos*, fully loses her *parthenia* when we *know* that she has had sex (or, in the case of some thinkers, when we know she has been tainted by sexual experience) – and not before. What is more, our ability to know the signs may depend on our own state of sexual experience.<sup>25</sup>

### THE UNKNOWABILITY OF VIRGINITY

Given the inherent uncertainty of virginity, it is somewhat surprising that several of the Greek novels seem to be obsessed with virginity in itself, and particularly with the virginity of the heroine. As Doody notes, ‘...characters become heroines – and heroes – of chastity.’<sup>26</sup> But I wish to be quite specific: virginity takes its place within a panoply of related concepts (e.g., chastity, constancy, fidelity), and it is not every novel that focuses on virginity *per se*. Foucault mentions Chariton’s novel – probably the earliest of those that we have – as exceptional in that the hero and heroine are married at the beginning of the novel, and the long separation that follows tests their fidelity rather than virginity. But as Hägg points out, this plot structure is regular in the ‘non-sophistic’ novels (Chariton, Xenophon of Ephesus, Iamblichos).<sup>27</sup> It is only with the ‘sophistic’ novels of Achilles Tatius, Heliodorus and, to a lesser extent, Longus, that virginity itself becomes an issue. Here, then, is an important step in the literary and social development of Romance identified by Winkler; and a full discussion of virginity in Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus reveals an astonishing theoretical sophistication about virginity as a literary trope.

Before entering into this discussion, however, I must address an important objection that has been raised to Foucault’s formulation about the novels’ concern with virginity. In his important study, David Konstan has argued that the novels demonstrate a concern with a shared



constancy of feeling between hero and heroine, rather than virginity or even chastity. He sees, in fact, the notion of purity as beside the point: ‘Foucault’s emphasis on virginity as the basis for as a spiritual marriage reads into the novels a concern with purity that is largely extraneous to the texts.’<sup>28</sup> While Konstan does indeed show that remaining constant in affection seems to be more important than physical inviolability, detail after detail in the novels shows that the characters in them — and indeed, the readers of them — are fully invested in the heroine’s virginity itself. I will point out several of these points in the detailed discussions that follow; for now, the following passage from Achilles Tatius (the more ribald of the two stories) will suffice.

In Achilles Tatius’ novel, known to us as *Leukippe and Kleitophon*, Leukippe becomes separated from her beloved Kleitophon, is abducted by pirates, and eventually comes under the control of a powerful man named Thersandros in the city of Ephesos. Thersandros, smitten by Leukippe’s beauty, is determined to have sex with her, willing or unwilling (Ach. Tat. *LK* 6.20-21). Thersandros’ servant and go-between, Sosthenes, advises Leukippe that she will be tortured so that she learns to respect her master. Leukippe rather seems to welcome this prospect — a common feature of erotic heroines — and tries to inspire shame in Thersandros:

«εἴτα Κλειτοφῶντα μοιχὸν καλεῖς, αὐτὸς μοιχὸς ὢν; οὐδὲ τὴν Ἄρτεμιν, εἰπέ μοι, τὴν σὴν φοβῆ, ἀλλὰ βιάζῃ παρθένον ἐν πόλει παρθένου; δέσποινα, ποῦ σου τὰ τόξα;» «Παρθένος;» εἶπεν ὁ Θέρσανδρος· «ὦ τόλμης καὶ γέλωτος· παρθένος τοσοῦτοις συννυκτερεύσασα πειραταῖς; εὐνοῦχοί σοι γεγόνασιν οἱ λησταί; φιλοσόφων ἦν τὸ πειρατήριον; οὐδεὶς ἐν αὐτοῖς εἶχεν ὀφθαλμούς;»

Καὶ ἡ Λευκίππη εἶπεν· «Ἡ παρθένος, καὶ μετὰ Σωσθένην· ἐπεὶ πυθοῦ Σωσθένους· οὗτος γὰρ ὄντως γέγονέ μοι ληστής. ἐκεῖνοι γὰρ ἦσαν ὑμῶν μετριώτεροι, καὶ οὐδεὶς αὐτῶν ἦν οὕτως ὑβριστής.»

‘And then you call Kleitophon an adulterer, when you yourself are one? Tell me, do you not fear Artemis, your very Artemis, but you rape a virgin in the city of the virgin? Mistress (Artemis), where is your bow?’ ‘Virgin?’ said Thersandros; ‘Bold and laughable! You are a virgin having spent nights together with so many pirates? Did the brigands become eunuchs with you? Was the pirate-den a school of philosophy? Did none of them have eyes?’

And Leukippe said, ‘Yes, a virgin, even after Sosthenes; but learn from him. For he himself has become truly a brigand to me. For they (the pirates) were more temperate than you, and none of them was so violent as you.’

(Ach. Tat. *LK* 6.21.2-6.22.)

Leukippe goes on in this vein at some length. Significantly, she calls on her protective goddess Artemis, with whom she is consistently paired in the novel, to witness and protect her untouched state. As often with Achilles Tatius, there is a moment of humor even at this serious juncture, in the contrast between the pirates' presumed sexual violence and the professed, but often suspect, chastity of philosophers.<sup>29</sup> The passage is particularly important, moreover, because it makes it clear that what is at stake for Leukippe is not merely a purity of intent. That is, had Leukippe been raped by pirates, such an act would not have compromised her love for, or constancy of affection for Kleitophon; but she insists here on a more stringent standard, that of physical integrity in the face of overwhelming force.<sup>30</sup>

Leukippe's constant defense of her virginity here is worth noting for another reason. Virtually the only reason that this heroine speaks in public is to declare the truth of her virginity — this defense is her 'entrance into subjectivity,' as Haynes argues.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, at the end of the novel, we hear that the decisive establishment of her *parthenia* allows Leukippe a new kind of speech:

ἡ Λευκίππη δέ, ἅτε δὴ μᾶλλον τὸν πατέρα μηκέτι αἰδουμένη  
ὥς ἂν σαφῶς παρθένος εὐρεθεῖσα, τὰ συμβάντα μετὰ ἡδονῆς διηγείτο.

And Leukippe, no longer ashamed before her father, as one who had been clearly proven a *parthenos*, narrated her adventures with pleasure (*hēdonē*).  
(Ach. Tat. *LK* 8.15.3)

This virginity, which is by its nature a secret, private thing, and which is represented before this by Leukippe's modesty, creates in the end a venue for public female speech. Perhaps even more surprising, it allows, in that speech, the one thing that Leukippe has so far forgone: pleasure.

With Leukippe then, and specifically with her virginity, the Romance either succeeds or falls. If she were not a virgin when confronted by Thersandros, the implication is that she would then have no grounds for refusing his advances. It is by defending that virginity, by keeping it closely guarded, that the plot towards marriage with Kleitophon can progress. Only once this

virginity has been decisively proven can Leukippe speak openly of the adventures that she has undergone and eventually feel a legitimate form of pleasure. As she defends her lack of sexual knowledge and experience, however, the novel paradoxically makes that virginity into a highly public secret, both because the heroine must defend it to various interested parties, and because the narrative repeatedly presents it to us, the desiring reader. As Morales says, ‘Paradoxically, the more Leukippe protests her virginity, the more she draws attention to her sexual self.’<sup>32</sup> Kleitophon, as we will see, lays claim to a parallel state, though his claim is carefully and craftily undermined, and is ultimately unnecessary to the plot. The task that remains is to ask why Leukippe’s physical integrity – however defined – is necessary for the form of Romance.

To begin, it is clear that the form of *erōs* in the novels depends, in a sense, on a structure like that of virginity. As Winkler noted, ‘Love in the Greek novels is rather like birth or death — it only happens once.’<sup>33</sup> The fact that the hero and heroine are faithful to one another represents the unique quality of their erotic desire, and the continual peril that the heroine’s virginity undergoes is parallel to the trials that beset the lovers. A loss of virginity, even if unintentional, would endanger the uniqueness of the heroic pair’s love just as it would put Leukippe’s devotion to Kleitophon at risk. At the same time, as Anne Carson has shown, the focus on the central pair’s virginity puts the readers’ desires at odds with that of the characters’: we are invested in the characters *not* experiencing sex, at least not until the final page, although this is something that the characters themselves may desire most urgently.<sup>34</sup> Once virginity is decisively known, it is lost, and so only as long as it is not known for certain does the plot of the Romance continue. The constant tension that characterizes literary virginity becomes, then, the engine that drives the Romantic plot.<sup>35</sup>

At the same time, both Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus create an amusing discourse about virginity as a form of knowledge. The heroine’s virginity in particular is characterized as a lack of experience; the tests at the end of these novels, as Goldhill has noted of Achilles Tatius in particular, question ‘the *knowability*, the *testability* of female chastity.’<sup>36</sup> But it is not only within the frame of the novels that virginity takes on a curiously indeterminate nature. Each of these

two novels, in different ways, forecloses *our* ability to know the virginity of the heroine. Indeed, it is difficult to say exactly what virginity is, as opposed to what it is not; and in the course of these novels, the constant testing and retesting of virginity becomes itself the sign of virginity.<sup>37</sup> When we ask what it is that the sign signifies, what lies behind the veil, it turns out that the only thing signified is the veil itself. Virginity, in the high rhetoric of these playful texts, becomes nothing more than the series of tests that attest to it, and the endless necessity for those tests.

This structure will become clearer once we have looked at some specific examples. Here Sissa's formulations are particularly helpful. Sissa notes that in Greek texts, virginity is never a clearly discernible fact; indeed, the two novels treated here rely on abstract and counter-intuitive tests to establish the heroine's virginity shortly before the close of the plot.<sup>38</sup> (The man's purity is tested in both as well, though as I will show, neither novel is concerned with male virginity in quite the same way as female.) This indirectness is not only characteristic, but is essential to the idea of virginity: virginity is precisely the state of not having declared, or demonstrated, sexual experience.<sup>39</sup> From this stems both the need for constant testing, each instance of which is somehow unconvincing enough to allow room for further tests. This structure also informs the pleasure afforded to the reader: the tests both confirm the heroine's virginity and open that virginity to our always inquiring gaze. Virginity, then, becomes not a state of being, but a constant state of being inquired about.

### WHAT READER?

I have now opened the Pandora's box of the reader's desire, and this necessitates a few words about this reader. A good deal of work has been done on the historical readers of the ancient novels, in a largely speculative attempt to construct a satisfying social context for the genre as it develops. More specifically, much of the early scholarship on the ancient novel assumed both middle-class readers and, potentially, a large female readership.<sup>40</sup> The arguments for such historical readerships, however, rest almost entirely on the analogy to Victorian and

modern romance novels, whose readers can be documented with some authority.<sup>41</sup> One also sees a tendency to imagine female readers for the simple reason that the heroines of these novels are strong characters, often more intelligent and capable than the heroes they marry.<sup>42</sup> Although it is rarely put so baldly, critics have assumed that such characters would appeal to a female readership. Doody, without entirely disallowing the possibility of educated female readers in the original audience, points out with clarity that all such arguments tell us more about the politics of the academy than the original readership: ‘...attribution of novel-reading to the juvenile and the female is always a politically charged gesture, both as an expression of anxiety and as a cover for it.’<sup>43</sup>

As others have already pointed out, moreover, the social and economic conditions that led to the rise of the novel in Victorian England are far from present in the period of the Greek novels.<sup>44</sup> Stephens presents a solid analysis of the outside evidence, such as it is, and concludes that the relative paucity of papyri from the novels suggests, if anything, that they are not terribly popular texts.<sup>45</sup> What, though, of the female readership? Again, the external evidence is weak. Given what we know about literacy rates in antiquity, the likelihood of women buying and reading these texts is low.<sup>46</sup> Barring some overwhelming internal evidence, all the objective data that we have points against a primary audience of middle-class literate women.

As for the internal evidence, again, there is little solid to go on. It is true that the heroines of these novels are strong, admirable and even inspiring characters. It is also true, however, that the reader of these novels must be highly literate in order to understand their many allusions, references, and high rhetorical style.<sup>47</sup> If criticism of the modern popular romance has established anything, moreover, it is that there is no easy correspondence between the readers of romances and the characters in them.<sup>48</sup> The women who overwhelmingly read modern romance novels demonstrate a variety of responses to the heroines, seeing them as close in situation to their own lives or, alternatively, living in escapist fantasies. Perhaps most important of all, we should remember that even books written (largely) by women for women can, as the modern supermarket romance does, work to reinforce patriarchal principles.<sup>49</sup> There is little to be gained

by supposing a correspondence between Kharikleia and the readers of Romance, either in the way of historical knowledge, or for understanding the form of the ancient narratives.

On the other hand, if we put aside for the moment our historical reader, and look instead at the reader who is implied by the narrative itself, we discover some important aspects of the ancient novel. As Morales has pointed out, Achilles Tatius provides us with series of *ways* of reading, through various characters' acts of reading and interpretation; these readers include from the realistic bully Thersandros, the voyeurist Kleitophon, and the easily carried away Callisthenes. These characters, then,

...are constructed to function as regulatory fictions, directing the reader against particular ways of reading. However, Achilles' moral universe is not sharply polarized and no one character or way of reading is stamped with a clear seal of approval. There is no internal 'ideal reader' who serves as a metafictional model of reading, but by dramatising the various ways of reading, the narrative pre-empts, reflects and positions its own readers.<sup>50</sup>

Similarly, Winkler's extensive narratological analysis of Heliodorus provides us with some remarkable instances of playful gestures towards the correct — if naïve — reader of the Romance. Internal character-narrators like Kalasiris model for us the necessary suspension of disbelief at incredible events, as well as the emotionally charged acceptance of the highly improbable solutions that eventually present themselves. As Winkler says, 'The singular experience of this novel for us is its analysis, through romance-readers like Kalasiris, of comprehending a romance.'<sup>51</sup>

Heliodorus is particularly rich in passages that serve, after the fact, to instruct the reader on how to read.<sup>52</sup> Early in Heliodorus' sophisticated novel, Kharikleia tells Thyamis, the leader of the robbers who holds her and Theagenes captive, a complicated story about how they have arrived in his hands. As Winkler notes, this brief narrative is 'nearly a parody of the Greek romance as a genre.'<sup>53</sup> At the finish, she promises to marry Thyamis, but asks for a brief delay in

order to lay aside her religious ties to Apollo (Heliod. *Aeth.* 1.22). A few moments later, she must explain to her lover Theagenes why she has promised to marry Thyamis:

Ὅρμην γάρ, ὡς οἶσθα, κρατούσης ἐπιθυμίας μάχη μὲν ἀντίτυπος ἐπιτείνει, λόγος δὲ εἰκὼν καὶ πρὸς τὸ βούλημα συντρέχων τὴν πρώτην καὶ ζέουσιν φορὰν ἔστειλε καὶ τὸ κάτοξυ τῆς ὀρέξεως τῷ ἡδεῖ τῆς ἐπαγγελίας κατεύνασε.

Rigid combat, as you know, incites the onset of powerful desire, while an agreeable speech, one that goes along with the other's plans, can dispatch the first boiling arrival, and can calm the sharpness of desire with the sweetness of a promise.

(Heliod. *Aeth.* 1.26.3)

The first thing to notice, of course, is that this speech is delightfully ambiguous; it serves to calm Theagenes just as her earlier promise to marry calmed Thyamis. Only our assurance that Kharikleia is deceiving Thyamis, but not Theagenes, allows this bit of rhetoric to convince. Next, as much as this speech reassures Theagenes, it also sets out a poetics for the reader. In this particular case, as Winkler points out, the fact that Kharikleia's narrative to Thyamis is not true means that 'it has also postponed our learning who Kharikleia really is.'<sup>54</sup> Like both Theagenes and Thyamis, we are charmed by Kharikleia's story, and therefore willing to suspend our desire to know her until the plot plays out. As we read, we will watch her parry various attempts on her virginity and, like both Thyamis and Theagenes, we are continually put off from any certain knowledge by her charms and blandishments.

When we look specifically at the issue of virginity, moreover, it becomes increasingly clear that the notional reader of these texts is positioned as male in a particular way. First, if the reader is to fully appreciate the perils that befall the heroine, he must fall on the side of knowledge (as opposed to innocence) with regard to sex. Indeed, all of Longus *Daphnis and Chloe* can be read as a kind of parlor game in which we readers are interpellated into a state of sexual experience in order to enjoy the hapless struggles of hero and heroine.<sup>55</sup> While such sexual experience is not the exclusive purview of men, only men can enjoy it publicly without damage to their social standing.<sup>56</sup> It is, I would argue, no coincidence that the Leukippe must

continually declare her virginity to men who are sexually experienced, whether brigands like Sosthenes or her father at the end of her adventures.<sup>57</sup> They are internal narratees, parallel to the textually contracted reader.<sup>58</sup>

At the same time, this notionally male reader is always kept in the dark, or at least kept somewhat off-balance in his knowledge of the heroine's virginity. As we will see in the case of Heliodorus especially, virginity is constituted by the narrative as a secret to which no man is fully privy. Indeed, at the end of the *Aethiopica*, it becomes part of a private narrative between Kharikleia and her mother, one which we are forcefully prevented from hearing. We readers may know all about sex, but virginity remains foggy, insubstantial, unrevealed. As we reach the end of the novel, ever more stringent demands on the heroine will necessitate increasingly rigid declarations of virginity on her part. As we will see, however, these declarations only increase our desire for a more certain, though always receding, knowledge about that virginity. That inquiry, as much as the always-frustrated relationship between the two lovers, drives the plot of the novel. In brief, the idea of the heroine's virginity inspires desire, not only in the unscrupulous characters who would possess her, but in the reader: for him, it is a desire to know, or rather, to enjoy the process of coming to know.

#### THE FUNCTION AND FRAUD OF MALE VIRGINITY

As we turn to a detailed exploration of virginity in Achilles Tatius' novel, it is useful to examine how closely this quality is allied with the heroine. This text in particular delights in calling up the idea of a parallel male virginity, which might appear to undermine the structure that I have suggested above. As we will see, however, the two virginities are not at all the same.

Early in Achilles Tatius' novel, the hero and heroine come surprisingly close to having sex.<sup>59</sup> The two are planning to elope, and Kleitophon enters Leukippe's bedroom late at night. Fortunately for the plot of the novel, Leukippe's mother is awakened by a nightmare, in which Leukippe is split open by a bandit with a dagger, and she rushes to Leukippe's bedroom to interrupt the coitus. Unrecognized, Kleitophon flees to his own room. Leukippe's mother



naturally assumes that Leukippe has been deflowered; but Leukippe pretends that she did not know who was in the room with her, and insists, ἔν οἶδα μόνον, οὐδεὶς μου τὴν παρθενίαν κατήσχυνε ('I know only one thing, than no one has disgraced my virginity', Ach.Tat. *LK* 2.25.1). From this first moment of danger and public denial, the novel continues for six more books, constantly putting Leukippe's virginity in peril while she defends it against all odds.<sup>60</sup> Every man who sees the heroine is inflamed with lust for her; and the stratagems used to try her virginity include a poison that make her insane (so that she has to be tied up while Kleitophon cares for her), straightforward persuasion, and the always popular use of force.

Kleitophon, meanwhile, undergoes a series of tests himself. Thinking that Leukippe is dead, he is eventually persuaded to give in to the desires of a (presumed) widow, Melite, and indeed he promises to marry her. It is important to note that it is not his virginity *per se* at stake here – as Goldhill points out, he mentions early in the novel a certain amount of experience with prostitutes (Ach.Tat. *LK* 2.37.8-9).<sup>61</sup> In this conversation, as Morales points out, he demonstrates considerable familiarity with women's experience of sex.<sup>62</sup> Even within these constraints, moreover, the testing of Kleitophon is not of the same character as the testing of Leukippe. Leukippe defends, as we saw in the scene with Thersandros (above), her virginity itself. She does so not only by resisting all sexual advances, but by speaking forcefully in defense of her virginity, that is, by declaring it in public speech. It is a matter of virtue to protect her personal integrity. Kleitophon's motivations are both less abstract and less absolute: he declares that he will marry Melite on the condition that she stop pestering him for sex until they reach Ephesos, for he has sworn never to have sex in Egypt, where he lost Leukippe (Ach.Tat. *LK* 5.12). When Melite does pester him, it is his memory of Leukippe that he again calls as a defense against her advances (Ach.Tat. *LK* 5.14-16).

The difference here is significant. While Konstan is surely correct that there is a mutuality of desire in this novel that sets it apart from most other Greek literature, the situation is not exactly symmetrical. For Kleitophon, his devotion to Leukippe herself keeps him pure — luckily, and mistakenly, since he thinks that she is dead, and it appears that he plans eventually to

consummate his marriage with Melite. For Leukippe, her virginity is emblematic of her love for Kleitophon and of herself as a subject, and so it must be defended in and of itself. This triangulation of desire – Kleitophon’s for Leukippe, Leukippe’s for virginity – necessarily draws the reader’s desire into the novel. *We* have become invested in Leukippe’s virginity, in part because the tests on it represent for us the deferral of romantic consummation that allows the narrative to continue.<sup>63</sup> We are interested in Kleitophon’s constancy, but it is not crucial to the plot in the same way. In fact, he will not remain faithful to Leukippe, and still the plot will go on.

In the working out of the plot, of course, Leukippe is not dead, and she re-enters Kleitophon’s life via a letter on the verge of his marriage to Melite. In it, Leukippe upbraids him for having married (as she thinks) Melite, and reminds him at length of the misfortunes she has suffered for his sake. The letter ends, bluntly: ἔρρωσο, καὶ ὄναιο τῶν καινῶν γάμων. ἐγὼ δὲ ἔτι σοι ταῦτα γράφω παρθένος (‘Be happy, and may you enjoy your new marriage. I write this to you still a *parthenos*’, 5.18.6). The meaning of *parthenos* is here subject to some ambiguity; given Leukippe’s emphasis on the fact that Kleitophon is married where she is not, she may be referring to social status rather than physical integrity. But the last sentence is awkward, stuck on after the writer has made her point about her devotion to Kleitophon. It would be entirely superfluous if she meant only ‘I am still unmarried.’ Rather, the point is that even after having suffered a multitude of bodily attacks, including two false deaths, beatings, and whippings as a slave, this one aspect of her body is still intact. That integrity both defines her as a speaking subject and literally embodies her unfailing devotion to Kleitophon.

That, in any case, is how Kleitophon takes it. For in the abject letter that he writes in response, he makes a curious claim.

εἰ μὲν οὖν τὴν ἀλήθειαν περιμένεις, μηδὲν προκαταγινώσκουσά μου, μαθήσῃ τὴν σὴν με παρθενίαν μεμιμημένον, εἴ τις ἔστι καὶ ἐν ἀνδράσι παρθενία· εἰ δέ με χωρὶς ἀπολογίας ἤδη μεμίσηκας, ὁμνυμί σοι τοὺς σώσαντάς σε θεούς, ὥς ἐν βραχεῖ σοι τὸ ἔργον ἀπολογήσομαι.

If you will wait for the truth, and do not judge me prematurely, you will learn that I have imitated your virginity (*parthenia*), if there is such a thing as virginity for

men. But if you hate me already, without hearing my defense, I swear to you by the savior gods that I will explain this matter to you briefly.

(Ach.Tat. *LK* 5.20.5)

This notion of male virginity is, as the wording of the letter shows, a curious one, and one that could be openly wondered about. Kleitophon will raise it again, under even more questionable circumstances. For the moment, Kleitophon uses the idea as a persuasive device: his constancy to Leukippe (that is, the fact that he and Melite have not had sex) is equated to her integral state. Unless he has forgotten his previous sexual experiences, the statement that he is a virgin is not literally true; but as a declaration of his constancy it serves a rhetorical point.<sup>64</sup> More importantly, in this letter Kleitophon clearly marks male virginity as mimetic of a female original. Leukippe can be a virgin, but Kleitophon can only imitate one. His *parthenia* does not inhere in himself, but is rather an ongoing virtuous action, subject to change at any moment.

The scene following Kleitophon's claim to male virginity is one of the most famous and most troubling passages in the novel. Melite, realizing that she will never be able to compete with Leukippe now that she has been discovered alive, pleads with Kleitophon to have sex with her nonetheless, in recognition of the *erōs* that she feels for him. Kleitophon gives in at last:

ὥς οὖν με ἔλυσε καὶ περιέβαλε κλαίουσα, ἔπαθόν τι ἀνθρώπινον καὶ ἀληθῶς ἐφοβήθην τὸν Ἔρωτα, μή μοι γένηται μῆνιμα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ ἄλλως ὅτι Λευκίππην ἀπειλήφειν, καὶ ὅτι μετὰ ταῦτα τῆς Μελίτης ἀπαλλάττεσθαι ἔμελλον, καὶ ὅτι οὐδὲ γάμος ἔτι τὸ πραττόμενον ἦν, ἀλλὰ φάρμακον ὥσπερ ψυχῆς νοσοῦσης. περιβαλλούσης οὖν ἡνειχόμεν καὶ περιπλεκομένης πρὸς τὰς περιπλοκάς οὐκ ἀντέλεγον· καὶ ἐγένετο ὅσα ὁ Ἔρως ἤθελεν...

When she released me and embraced me, crying, I suffered something human, and was truly afraid of Eros, lest some revenge come to me from the god, and besides, I was about to recover Leukippe, and too after this I would be released from Melite, and moreover, the act was no longer one of marriage, but more of a cure for an ailing soul. When she embraced, then, I did not hold back, and as she folded me in I did not argue against the folds; and everything happened as Eros wished...

(Ach.Tat. *LK* 5.27.2-3)

It is worth noting that this is the only actual act of sex within the confines of the plot; significantly, it takes place in a context that is specifically designated as outside of marriage.

What are we to make of Kleitophon's justification here, and how does it reflect on his own claim to virginity? Foucault, famously, refers to it simply as 'an honorable, minor lapse that Clitophon allowed himself.'<sup>65</sup> Konstan takes Kleitophon's self-justification seriously, and argues that what matters is not Kleitophon's chastity, but his emotional fidelity to Leukippe:

His motive is part mercy, part humility before the gods; his loyalty to Leucippe is not put to the test in the arena of physical continence. However titillating his episode with Melite may be to us, or perhaps to the ancient audience (and I suspect it was intended to be so) it does not compromise Clitopho's fidelity. Like Callirhoe, he remains worthy of regaining his spouse.<sup>66</sup>

Every reader will have her or his own response, of course. But in any case, part of the function of this self-conscious moment is to drive a conceptual wedge between chastity and fidelity, as Konstan points out in his extended discussion. Kleitophon, Achilles Tatius, and his later readers have worked hard to maintain Kleitophon's constancy of feeling despite his lack of chastity. To take Kleitophon's self-justification seriously, however, is to abandon the reader's knowing stance. Even in this novel of rhetorical sophistication, the hero's quadruple justification for his act seems a bit of a pile-up: it was a human response, and one of religious devotion, and of no consequence, and an act of healing. If we believe that Kleitophon believes all that he says, then we must do so with a wry smile at his lack of self-awareness; if not, then in forgiving him we become complicit in his twisting of the truth. In either case, a line has been drawn between Kleitophon's 'fidelity' and Leukippe's chastity, and the external reader is on the side of the line that understands the distinction, to our amusement. Leukippe, in the dark both about sex in general and about Kleitophon's 'minor lapse' remains on the side of innocence.<sup>67</sup>

Perhaps even more important, and in the same vein, is the next instance of Kleitophon's mention of male virginity. Leukippe's father Sostratos shows up in Ephesos, and in the course of events Kleitophon narrates his adventures to him, modifying, he says, the events with Melite to highlight his chastity (Ach.Tat. *LK* 8.5.3). He then tells Leukippe's story, and ends the story of their adventures thus:

Καὶ ἔμεινε, πάτερ, τοιαύτη μέχρι τῆς παρούσης ἡμέρας, οἷαν αὐτὴν ἐξέπεμψας ἀπὸ Βυζαντίου. καὶ οὐκ ἐμὸν τοῦτο ἐγκώμιον, ὅτι φυγὴν ἐλόμενος οὐδὲν ἔδρασα ὑπὲρ ὧν ἔφυγον, ἀλλ' αὐτῆς, ὅτι καὶ ἐν μέσοις λησταῖς ἔμεινε παρθένος καὶ τὸν μέγαν ἐνίκησε ληστήν, Θέρσανδρον λέγω, τὸν ἀναίσχυντον, τὸν βίαιον. ἐφιλοσοφήσαμεν, πάτερ, τὴν ἀποδημίαν· ἐδίωξε γὰρ ἡμᾶς ἔρως, καὶ ἦν ἐραστοῦ καὶ ἐρωμένης φυγὴ· ἀποδημήσαντες γεγόναμεν ἀλλήλων ἀδελφοί. εἴ τις ἄρα ἔστιν ἀνδρὸς παρθεσία, ταύτην καὶ γὰρ μέχρι τοῦ παρόντος πρὸς Λευκίππην ἔχω·

And she remains, father, up to the present day, just as she was when you sent her from Byzantium. And this praise does not fall to me, on the grounds that having taken flight I did not do what I took flight for, but to her, that in the midst of pirates she remained a *parthenos*, and defeated that great thief, I mean Thersandros the shameful, Thersandros the violent. We were philosophers, father, away from home. For *erōs* pursued us, and both lover and beloved fled; being away from home, we were siblings to one another. If indeed there is such a thing as male virginity (*andros parthenia*), I have it *towards Leukippe* up to the present.  
(Ach.Tat. *LK* 8.5.5-7, emphasis mine)

As Goldhill points out, the conditional quality of virginity for men ‘has become very conditional indeed.’<sup>68</sup> The question, though, is not so much whether virginity exists for men, as what it would mean. In Kleitophon’s case, what he means by ‘having virginity with respect to Leukippe’ is simply that he has not slept *with her*. Rather than being a statement of chastity (as it appears to Sostratos and Leukippe), it is a declaration to the reader of his infidelity. ‘Virginity’ here means ‘I have only slept with other women.’ Leukippe’s virginity remains paramount, in other words, while Kleitophon’s is exposed as an empty rhetorical stance. In this case, Kleitophon is allied with the external reader in occupying the position of relative knowledge: he has had experience of sex, and we know it. Only by mutual implicit agreement can we accept this as a form of ‘virginity.’

We must take this lighthearted moment seriously; Achilles Tatius’ novel posits, as Konstan argues, a Romance of mutual affection. But for the man in the romantic dyad, fidelity (to say nothing of bodily integrity) is a matter of legal technicality, and indiscretions can be the subject of rather funny self-justification. Kleitophon is so firmly entrenched in a state of knowledge that even his *parthenia* is a statement only about Leukippe’s innocence. The

heroine's absolute virginity, however, remains critical and deadly serious. The question remains: why is specifically *female* bodily integrity critical to the development of sophistic Romance?

### TESTING VIRGINITY

An answer, of sorts, is to be found in the literary convention, shared with Heliodorus, of testing the heroine's virginity at the end of the novel. Here again, an apparent parallel will be set up between Leukippe and Kleitophon, but that parallel will emphasize not the symmetry of hero and heroine, but rather the difference in their bodily states. More importantly, it will turn out that Leukippe's virginity will be tested in a queer, elusive fashion that suggests its opposite. In effect, the official 'test' of Leukippe's virginity functions for the characters in the novel in the same way that the narrative's tests of her virginity have functioned for us, the readers. That is, just as we have enjoyed being titillated, perhaps even sadistically thrilled by watching Leukippe drugged, tied up, and threatened with force only to rejoice in the triumph of her purity, the official test at the end of the novel subjects Leukippe to a new threat of sexual contact, only to prove in the end that she has had none.

The test of Leukippe's virginity, it should be noted, is given some motivation in the plot. Having escaped from her violent 'owner,' Thersandros, Leukippe seeks refuge in a temple of Artemis. The regulations of the temple stipulate that only men, slaves or free *virgins* may enter the temple; if Leukippe is not a virgin, then, she will have to return to Thersandros as a slave. There is an interesting conflation here of class and bodily purity; under the particular conditions that Leukippe finds herself in, only a virgin is free. This underscores the importance of Leukippe's virginity for the plot of Romance, for if she is not a free woman, then her marriage to Kleitophon will not be possible. Now the question is how to prove that Leukippe is a virgin; Thersandros calls her a *pseudoparthenos hetaira* ('false-virgin prostitute', Ach.Tat. *LK* 8.3.3) and declares that she will be tried by 'the syrx'. The test of the syrx is, as has been noted, overdetermined and suggestive.

The test is as follows: the woman in question is to enter a cave of Pan, where she will be closed in. If she is a virgin, the crowd outside will hear the lovely music of the syrinx. But if not, they will hear only a scream, in which case the crowd should leave for three days. On the third day, the cave is opened up, and when a priestess enters the cave she will find the syrinx, but the woman will be gone. The first thing to notice about this test is, as Sissa puts it, that it is ‘...based on the idea that *parthenia* is a nonevident quality to be detected by means of divination.’<sup>69</sup> That is, Leukippe’s integrity is a secret, and the type of secret that can only be expressed symbolically, indirectly, and by hiding her away from public view. Again, this reflects the nature of virginity. It resists expression, because it can only be expressed negatively, as a lack of knowledge, a lack of publicly known experience.

Achilles Tatius never stops at one layer, however, and there are two more hiding behind Leukippe’s virginity. In the first place, this idea that to prove herself a virgin she should lock herself up alone in a cave of Pan – a notoriously randy god – is a particularly bad one. The learned audience can hardly help think of heroines like Euripides’ Kreousa in the *Ion*, who was raped in just such a setting by Apollo, a more decorous if no more self-restrained god. On the off chance that we have missed this implied set-scene for rape, the story of the syrinx, presented at 8.6 as an *aition* for the test, brings it to the fore. Syrinx, it turns out, was a beautiful virgin (*parthenos*), pursued by Pan. As happens often in these sorts of cases, she escaped rape at the last moment by being turned into a vegetable, in this case the reeds of the syrinx.<sup>70</sup> Kleitophon, moreover, brings the structural irony to our attention just before Leukippe undergoes the test:

Ὅτι μὲν παρθένος εἶ, Λευκίππη, πεπίστευκα, ἀλλὰ τὸν Πᾶνα, ὃ φιλότατη,  
φοβοῦμαι. θεός ἐστι φιλοπάρθενος, καὶ δέδοικα μὴ δευτέρα καὶ σὺ σύριγξ γένη.

I have faith, Leukippe, that you are a virgin, but I fear, my beloved, this Pan. He  
is a virgin-loving god, and I am afraid lest even you become a second Syrinx.

(Ach. Tat. *LK* 8.13.2-3)

In brief, then, Leukippe’s virginity will be proven by subjecting it to a secretive test that looks like a set-up for rape; it will be established when we hear the music produced by one of Pan’s

previous sexual victims; and above all, it will express itself only in this indirect, suggestive fashion. As we have seen before, virginity is most present at the suggestion of its loss, and Achilles Tatius has gone to great lengths to pile up this conundrum. The reader, ultimately, is to blame: our desire for a virgin heroine is not a desire for purity itself, but for the constant proving of that purity through tests and perils.<sup>71</sup>

I have made much in this discussion of the contrast between Leukippe's purity and Kleitophon's pseudo-fidelity. Achilles Tatius' text does everything possible to highlight this contrast. For at the same time that Leukippe undergoes her virginity test, Melite is challenged by her (still living) husband Thersandros to defend herself from the charge of adultery. He has good reason to suspect her; at 6.3-5, he encountered Kleitophon, just risen from his tryst with Melite, and dressed (rather superfluously) in Melite's clothes and veil. But the test of Melite's fidelity is carefully constructed so that she will get off on a technicality. Thersandros requires her swear that she has not had sex with any man while he was gone: as we already know Melite and Kleitophon only had sex after her husband Thersandros had returned. Melite may be technically innocent, but we know that she has not been faithful – and neither has Kleitophon.<sup>72</sup>

The tests are set up to be parallel.<sup>73</sup> Again, there is a suggestive *aition*: Rhodopis was a virgin who kept company with Artemis, and swore to avoid sex in her devotion to the goddess. Aphrodite, angered, caused her to share a mutual passion with a hunter named Euthynikos.<sup>74</sup> After the two had sex – in a cave, naturally – Artemis recognized both what happened and that Aphrodite was behind it; she therefore turned Rhodopis into a spring called the Styx, which is subsequently used to test people who are accused 'of guilt in matters of Aphrodite' (Ach. Tat. *LK* 8.12.8). The test itself is rather curious: the accused woman must step into the spring of Rhodopis with a tablet around her neck proclaiming her oath. If the oath is false, the spring will rise up and cover the tablet; if true – in this case, if Melite has not committed adultery within the time specified – nothing will happen. Again, chastity (though not specifically virginity) is tested via indirect signs that invoke a narrative of sexual experience. Achilles Tatius arranges the text



itself, moreover, so that Melite undergoes the test of the river Styx immediately after Leukippe emerges from the cave of Pan (Ach. Tat. *LK* 8.14).

These forced structural parallels, however, are at the very least undermined by the contrasts between the two tests. On the level of the reader's knowledge, of course, Leukippe is the real deal, where Melite escapes on a technicality. We all know that she *has* committed adultery, and what's more, that she did so *after* she knew that her first husband was alive. Only Kleitophon's rhetorical brilliance (which has convinced several modern commentators) makes this into a mitigating circumstance. Perhaps more important is the fact that Melite's test is structurally different. Where Leukippe had to produce a miraculous result – the music of the syrinx – in order to be proven a virgin, Melite must simply produce no result to be proven innocent of infidelity. Where Leukippe's virginity is represented, then, as miraculous, Melite's rather mundane honesty is simply nothing – a non-reaction on the divine level.

Kleitophon's narration of Melite's test bears analysis:

ἡ Μελίτη τὸ γραμματεῖον περιέκειτο· ἡ πηγὴ ἔστηκε διαυγῆς καὶ ὀλίγη· ἡ δὲ ἐνέβη εἰς αὐτὴν καὶ ἔστη φαιδρῶ τῷ προσώπῳ. τὸ δὲ ὕδωρ οἷον ἦν κατὰ χώραν ἔμενε, μηδὲ τὸ βραχύτατον ἀναθορὸν τοῦ συνήθους μέτρου.

Melite was wearing the oath-tablet. The spring stood clear and small. She went into it and stood with a shining face. The water, such as it was, remained in its place, nor was there the slightest increase in its accustomed size.

(Ach.Tat. *LK* 8.14.3-4)

Kleitophon narrates with fastidious detail what is, in effect, a non-event. In the symbolic represented by these tests, then, Leukippe's virginity *is* something, is, in fact, a miracle. Melite's disingenuous fidelity is, simply, the lack of anything so miraculous. While the skill and care with which Achilles Tatius has arranged this contrast argue against taking this too seriously – this is entertainment, not moral instruction – at the level of fiction, Foucault is right: the novel elevates virginity to the level of prime cause and prime goal of the Romantic plot. How it came to be that all this literary fun became a serious social value, and indeed a way that people think real life ought to be, remains, as Winkler said, deeply mysterious. But the seeds are there in Achilles'

allusive, elusive female virginity: it is both the prize and the contest, the unrealized object of the reader's unquenchable desire.

### TENTS, GIRAFFES, AND BASTARD VIRGINS

If Achilles Tatius has deployed his considerable rhetorical and fictional skills in order to reveal the constant pursuit of the heroine's virginity, then Heliodorus plays an even more intricate game with the knowability of virginity.<sup>75</sup> Achilles Tatius puts his heroine's desire for virginity in conflict with the desire of every man she meets; Heliodorus constructs his Romance so that the virginity required by the genre becomes an impediment to the successful completion of the romantic plot. Again both hero and heroine have their purity tested, but by the last book of the novel, it is Kharikleia's virginity (or lack of it) that is critical and, remarkably, most ambiguous. In one of the most curious moments of ancient (or modern) Romantic fiction, her virginity is denied in such a way that her privacy and integrity are confirmed. She appears to be both a virgin, and not a virgin, at the same time.

Before proceeding with this analysis, we should recall Sissa's understanding of Greek virginity, namely that it is predominantly an issue of secrecy. It is not the first act of sex that changes the state of a *parthenos*, but rather its discovery. Heliodorus recognizes the essential privacy of virginity. He not only hides the nature of female virginity itself, but constructs its revelation as a kind of public secret, a moment of fully verified non-narrative to which even we readers are not privy.

It is easy to see why Foucault, speaking specifically of Heliodorus, found in virginity a mode of existence:

...virginity is not simply abstention as a preliminary to sexual practice. It is a choice, a style of life, a lofty form of existence that the hero chooses out of the regard that he has for himself.<sup>76</sup>

It may seem curious that Foucault seems to be speaking here of the hero rather than the heroine, but indeed, it is Theagenes who finds a ‘style of life’ in virginity. At 5.4.5, hero and heroine enjoy a ‘sinless embrace,’ and one which emphasizes Theagenes’ self-restraint:

Καὶ πάντων ἅμα εἰς λήθην ἐμπεσόντες εἶχοντο ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἀλλήλων οἶονεἰ  
 συμπεφυκότες, ἀγνεύοντος μὲν ἔτι καὶ παρθενεύοντος ἔρωτος κορεννύμενοι  
 δάκρυσι δὲ ὑγροῖς καὶ θερμοῖς εἰς ἀλλήλους κεραννύμενοι καὶ καθαροῖς μόνον  
 μιγνύμενοι τοῖς φιλήμασιν· ἡ γὰρ Χαρικλεία τὸν Θεαγένην εἴ τι παρακινουῖντα  
 αἰσθοῖτο καὶ ἀνδριζόμενον ὑπομνήσει τῶν ὀρκῶν ἀνέστελλεν, ὁ δὲ οὐ χαλεπῶς  
 ἐπανήγετο καὶ σωφρονεῖν ῥαδίως ἡνείχετο ἔρωτος μὲν ἐλάττων ἡδονῆς δὲ  
 κρείττων γινόμενος.

And immediately having fallen into forgetfulness of everything, they embraced each other as tightly as if they had become one, having their fill of a chaste and inexperienced love, pouring into one another wet and hot tears, and mixing only in their pure affection. For if Kharikleia perceived Theagenes being somewhat too excited and acting manly, she held him back with a reminder of their oaths; and he with no difficulty pulled himself back, and easily was restrained to chastity, being inferior to love, but stronger than pleasure.

(Heliod. *Aeth.* 5.4.5)

We see here the construct that Foucault argued for through much of volume two of his *History of Sexuality*, namely that true manhood depends in nothing so much as control over one’s desires<sup>77</sup> – and so Theagenes is both ideal man and ideal romantic hero. Indeed, later in the novel, when he is (literally) enslaved to Arsake and being tortured in an attempt to make him sleep with her, he not only withstands the torture, but declares that he is pleased to have a chance to demonstrate his love and devotion to Kharikleia (Heliod. *Aeth.* 8.6.4). Kharikleia, however, appears here to do Theagenes one better. Though she shares wet, hot tears with her beloved, the narrative suggests no internal struggle for self-control on her part. On the contrary, her self-control appears a given — and moreover, she also exerts a form of control over Theagenes’ masculine libido. If he is an ideal hero, she is the heroine who provides his temperance. Her virginity becomes the impetus and the model for his self-restraint.

As for Kharikleia, she too is highly protective of her virginity, and it seems here again that it is a sense of personal integrity (and not merely constancy, or chastity) that is at question.

In one of the more remarkable moments of the novel, Kharikleia, who has been separated from Theagenes, prays that he will come to her in her dreams:

Εἰ δέ μοι περισώζῃ καλῶς γε ποιῶν, δεῦρο καὶ  
 συνανάπαυσαι φίλος, ὄναρ γοῦν ὀφθείς· φείδου δὲ καὶ τότε,  
 ὧ ἄγαθέ, καὶ φύλαττε νομίμῳ γάμῳ τὴν σὴν παρθένον·

If you are safe, and doing well, then, dear, come rest with me, visible at least as a dream. But even then hold, noble sir, and guard your *parthenos* for lawful marriage.

(Heliod. *Aeth.* 6.8.6)

Kharikleia's relationship with Theagenes is such that even in her dreams she wishes him to take care not to violate her; there is a clear sense here of something – the state of being a *parthenos* – which can be lost, and which must be guarded for marriage. Despite the ambiguities that often surround the term *parthenos*, here it is clear that Kharikleia is referring not to a social status but to a personal state of being. This state does not exist on a purely physical level, since a dream of sex would not violate physical integrity; rather, it is a state of ignorance, a sense of not having experienced sex.

All this sounds rather serious, and indeed Heliodorus has often been read as more earnest than his counterparts.<sup>78</sup> But as Winkler has shown, Heliodorus' method is self-consciously to parody the genre in which he writes; this is particularly true with regard to the novel's tests of virginity. As readers of the novel will remember, these tests, which take place early in the last book, are themselves constructed as something else, namely, verification that Theagenes and Kharikleia are suitable sacrificial victims. Near the end of their long, complex travel-narrative, they reach Kharikleia's native Ethiopia in the chains of slavery, and they are selected to be sacrificial victims at a rite over which Kharikleia's father and mother (the King and Queen) preside. Needless to say, Heliodorus has managed affairs skillfully so that ironies abound, and so that emotions are deliberately pulled in multiple directions. What should be a joyful reunion looks like it will instead be the death of hero and heroine; they are selected to be sacrificial victims in part because of their striking, and narratively appropriate, beauty. Even the crowd

regrets that such beautiful specimens must be killed. Before the two can be sacrificed, however, they must first be proven pure.

To do so, hero and heroine are subjected to a yet another strangely indirect test: they, along with the other captives, must stand upon a magic gridiron (*eschara*). Those who are completely free and clear from sexual intercourse of any kind will not be harmed; but those who have had any sort of sexual experience will find that the gridiron burns their feet.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, her mother Persinna, who does not yet realize Kharikleia's identity, explicitly hopes that Kharikleia will fail the test that we know she must pass:

Καὶ ἡ Περσίννα «Φωραθείη» ἔφη «καὶ σωθείη μόνον· αἰχμαλωσία καὶ πόλεμος καὶ τοσοῦτος τῆς ἐνεγκούσης ἐξοικισμὸς ἀνέγκλητον ποιεῖ τὴν προαίρεσιν, καὶ πλέον ἐπὶ ταύτης, ἐν τῷ κάλλει τὴν καθ' ἑαυτῆς βίαν, εἰ καὶ τι τοιοῦτον ὑπέστη, περιαγούσης.»

And Persinna said, 'May she be detected (i.e. as not a virgin), so long as she is saved. For enslavement and war and such an exile from her mother provide an irreproachable excuse, and more so for this one, who brings violence against herself by means of her beauty, if indeed she has suffered any such thing.'

(Heliod. *Aeth.* 10.7.8)

As often, the speaker professes ignorance as to the true state of the heroine's virginity, while at the same time allowing that if it has been lost, it is excusable. Here, however, we see the full extent of the tension between Persinna's knowledge and desires and our own. Unlike Persinna, we know that that Kharikleia has *not* lost her virginity, and moreover, we do not want to her to have done so. All questions of human sacrifice aside, her virginity is required for the success of the romantic plot. For Persinna, however, it is better that Kharikleia have lost her virginity, in circumstances beyond her control, if it means that her life will be spared. Her desire is directly counter to the requirements of the genre.

The plot of the Romance, in fact, has been manipulated so that it collides with the plot of Kharikleia's recovery of her parents: if she is a virgin, she is to be sacrificed, and if she is not, she is not the heroine of a Romance. This point is emphasized when both Theagenes and Kharikleia pass the test of the gridiron. Theagenes himself comments after his trial:

«Καλὰ» λέγων ἡρέμα πρὸς τὴν Χαρικλείαν «τάπικειρα παρ' Αἰθίοπι τῶν  
καθαρῶς βιούντων· θυσίαι καὶ σφαγαὶ τὰ ἔπαθλα τῶν σωφρονούντων.»

... saying quietly to Kharikleia, 'A fine wage in Ethiopia for living a pure life;  
sacrifice and slaughter are the prizes of living temperately.'

(Heliod. *Aeth.* 10.9.1)

When Kharikleia stands on the gridiron, moreover, the crowd is awed by her beauty, which is all the more stunning because of her *sophrosyne* (temperance or, here as often, chastity.) The narrator then has the spectators experience the same quandary that faces us:

Ἐλύπει μὲν οὖν καὶ ἄλλους τῶν ὄχλων ἀρμόδιος τῇ θυσίᾳ φανεῖσα, καὶ  
δεισιδαιμονοῦντες ὅμως ἥδιστα ἂν εἶδον ἕκ τινος μηχανῆς περισωθεῖσαν.

The fact that she appeared suitable for sacrifice saddened even the others in the crowd, and despite their piety, they would nevertheless have been pleased to see her saved by some sort of ruse.<sup>80</sup>

(Heliod. *Aeth.* 10.9.5)

Failing such a ruse, it appears that the plot of the Romance will fail with the death of hero and heroine.

Needless to say, considerable narrative skill has been deployed to bring us to this point of emotional conflict. Our desires, as those of the witnesses within the story, are at perfect odds with one another. We should recognize this as an amplification of exactly the tension that virginity represents in the typical ancient Romance. We want the hero and heroine to have sex – but not yet. Our pleasure as readers is tied to the fact that, for the course of the narrative, their virginity remains intact. As Anne Carson points out, to read a Romance is to replicate the experience of being in love: '...as readers, we are typically and repeatedly drawn into a conflicted emotional response which approximates that of the lovers' souls divided by love.'<sup>81</sup> Heliodorus has pushed this tension as far as it can go, pushed it so far, in fact, that it can only be resolved by a sleight of hand.

I intend the image of sleight of hand quite literally: for, as in a conjuror's trick, Heliodorus distracts us from the central question of Kharikleia's virginity, and in so doing resolves the conundrum of the plot. The sequence of events is complex, and in teasing it out, I will quote from the text at some length. First, Kharikleia saves herself from sacrifice by establishing her identity as the king and queen's daughter. This is no easy matter, for Kharikleia's skin is fair and unlike that of her Ethiopian parents. The manner of her recognition is significant: Kharikleia prostrates herself before the king and, after considerable back-and-forth, produces the tokens that prove her identity. First and chief among them is a band of cloth, inscribed in royal Ethiopian script, on which her mother had explained the circumstances of Kharikleia's birth. It turns out that Kharikleia is white-skinned because, at the moment of conception, her mother was looking at a picture of the maiden Andromeda, and the image imprinted on the fetus. It was this white skin-color that led to the Persinna abandoning her child. As a mark of identity, then, this cloth is nicely self-referential: it not only tells the story of Kharikleia's birth, but identifies her with the maiden Andromeda, a paragon of virtue.<sup>82</sup>

More importantly, however, the band also contains important motherly advice to Kharikleia, advice that we had the opportunity to read back in book four.<sup>83</sup>

Ἀλλ' ὃ γλυκεῖα καὶ μέχρις ὥρας θύγατερ, ὅπως εἰ περιγένοιο μεμνήσῃ τῆς εὐγενείας τιμῶσα σωφροσύνην, ἣ δὴ μόνη γυναικείαν ἀρετὴν χαρακτηρίζει, καὶ φρόνημα βασιλείου καὶ πρὸς τοὺς φύντας ἀναφέρον ἀσκοῦσα· μεμνήσῃ δὲ πρὸ πάντων τῶν συνεκτεθέντων σοι κειμηλίων δακτύλιόν τινα ἐπιζητεῖν καὶ σεαυτῇ περιποιεῖν, ὃν πατὴρ ὁ σὸς ἐμοὶ παρὰ τὴν μνηστείαν ἐδωρήσατο βασιλείῳ μὲν συμβόλῳ τὸν κύκλον ἀνάγραφτον λίθῳ δὲ παντάρβῃ καὶ ἀπορρήτῳ δυνάμει τὴν σφενδόνην καθιερωμένον.

But, sweet and only-for-an-hour daughter, if somehow you survive, remember your good birth, honoring chastity (*sophrosunê*) which alone distinguishes womanly virtue, and practicing royal thoughts, and thoughts that recall your parents. Above all, be sure to find a certain ring among the treasures that were left with you, and keep it with you. Your father gave it to me during our courtship, engraved with a royal mark in a circle, and set with a *pantarbe* stone and with unspeakable power.

(Heliod. *Aeth.* 4.8.7)

Not only does the band explain Kharikleia's birth (and explain away her troubling pigmentation), then, it also urges her to do the one thing that she has done throughout the novel: protect her chastity. The *pantarbe* stone, moreover, acts as an emblem of this chastity, a 'precious jewel' which, if kept with her always, will act as a magical protection.<sup>84</sup> The *pantarbe* protected Kharikleia from being burnt alive in book 8; her virginity protected her from the gridiron in book ten. When Kharikleia produces both text and *pantarbe* in book 10, these tokens of her finally prevent her from being a sacrificial victim (Heliod. *Aeth.* 10.16-17). Her virginity becomes both her identity and her protection.

But a difficulty remains: Theagenes is not related to the King and Queen, is still an alien to the Ethiopians, and still to be sacrificed to the Sun. In a curious dodge, Kharikleia asks that she be allowed to sacrifice him with her own hand. Neither Kharikleia nor the narrator explains what she hopes to accomplish with this request, the first of several small rifts in the narrative. In any case, however, it turns out that her virginity is again an impediment even to this possible rescue scheme. Hydaspes (the king, her father) responds:

καὶ τούτου δὲ ὄντος τὸ δυνατόν οὐκ ἔστι· μόνοις γὰρ τοῖς ἱερωμένοις τῷ τε Ἠλίῳ καὶ τῇ Σεληναίᾳ πρὸς τῶν πατρίων ἀποκεκλήρωται ἥδε ἡ πρᾶξις, καὶ τούτοις οὐ τοῖς τυχοῦσιν ἀλλὰ τοῦ μὲν γυναικὶ τῆς δὲ ἀνδρὶ συνοικουσης· ὥστε ἡ κατὰ σε παρθενία κωλύει τὴν οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπως γινομένην αἴτησιν.

But there is no possibility of this. For this deed is assigned only to those priests and priestesses of the Sun and the Moon from the fatherland; and to these not by chance, but only to a man married to a wife and to a woman married to a husband; thus your virginity (*parthenia*) prevents this inexplicable request from happening.  
(Heliod. *Aeth.* 10.21.2)

Again, it is important to note that it is not merely a question of Kharikleia not being married, but of her state of virginity (*parthenia*) that prevents her from performing the sacrifice.

At this point, the impossible happens. Kharikleia responds that she already *has* a husband, if her parents will approve. Her mother, apparently misunderstanding, assures her that they will be happy to marry her to a fitting husband. Kharikleia's response is puzzling: «Οὐδὲν



δεῖ ἐπιλέγειν» ἔφη «τὸν ὄντα ἤδη» ('There is no need to choose a husband,' she said, 'when one already exists', Heliod. *Aeth.* 10.21.3). And now, in what will become a familiar textual move, the narrator tells us that Kharikleia was on the verge of explaining herself more fully despite her modesty, but Hydaspes cut her off. His questions, as we will see, are exactly ours. Theagenes her husband? When? Did they sneak off and get married (and have sex?) while we were not paying attention? Unfortunately, of course, Hydaspes' surprise, and consequent exclamation is exactly what prevents us from obtaining an answer to these questions.<sup>85</sup>

Hydaspes' exclamation is telling. After some choice words for the gods, whom he views as taunting him unmercifully, Hydaspes gets to the point:

Καὶ τοῦτο ὡς οὐ θεμιτὸν λεγόντων, μιᾷ μόνῃ καὶ ταύτῃ ὑπάνδρῳ τῆς τοιαύτης  
 θυσίας καθωσιωμένης, ἄνδρα ἔχειν ἐμφαίνει τὸ τίνα οὐ προστιθεῖσα· πῶς γὰρ τὸν  
 γε μὴδὲ ὄντα μὴδὲ γεγενῆσθαι αὐτῇ διὰ τῆς ἐσχάρας ἀποδειχθέντα; εἰ μὴ ἄρα  
 παρὰ ταύτῃ μόνῃ ψεύδεται μὲν τὸ παρ' Αἰθίοψιν ἀψευδὲς τῶν καθαρευόντων  
 πειρατήριον καὶ ἐπιβᾶσαν ἄφλεκτον ἀποπέμπεται καὶ παρθενεύειν νόθως  
 χαρίζεται· μόνῃ δὲ ἔξεστι φίλους καὶ πολεμίους τοὺς αὐτοὺς ἐν ἀκαρεῖ  
 καταλέγειν, ἀδελφοὺς δὲ καὶ ἄνδρας τοὺς μὴ ὄντας ἀναπλάττειν.

And when we told her that this (i.e. that for her to sacrifice Theagenes) was forbidden, since performing this sacrifice is allowed for only one woman, and that a woman with a husband, she claimed to have a husband, though she did not say who; for how (could she), since he neither exists nor had been shown to exist for her by the gridiron? Unless indeed the never-false-to-the-Ethiopians test of purity is false for her alone, and sends her away unburned after she steps on it, and grants her to be a virgin in a bastard fashion; unless for her alone is it possible to consider friends and enemies the same at the same moment, and to invent brothers and husbands who do not exist.

(Heliod. *Aeth.* 10.22.3)

Indeed, the situation is perplexing. How can Kharikleia be married, and yet a virgin? The language that Hydaspes uses to frame this paradox is telling: where I have translated 'grants her to be a virgin in bastard fashion' relies on the adverb *nothôs*. This adverb, quite rare, comes from the noun *nothos*, properly a son born outside of a man's line of legitimacy.<sup>86</sup> The adverbial form of the word comes to mean, apparently, 'insincerely,' and is used by Porphyry to refer to spurious literary works,<sup>87</sup> but in the context of Heliodorus' narrative it is difficult to avoid the

connotations of illicit sexual activity. Taken quite literally, Hydaspes is saying that Kharikleia is a virgin in a manner that involves sex out of wedlock. It is no wonder that he is exasperated. The result, however, is a brilliant bit of plotting: he sends his wife into a tent with Kharikleia, with instructions to try to discover the truth.

Kharikleia is thereby removed from our view, taken to a tent whose privacy both represents and ensures the secrecy and silence that is her virginity. Indeed, this silence has been a crucial part of Kharikleia's character. At 10.18.2, she remarked that it would be best for Theagenes to tell Hydaspes who he is, since he, unlike her, will not be ashamed (*aischainusetai*).<sup>88</sup> During the time that she is in the tent, moreover, Theagenes himself begins to resent her silence, since it is now the one thing that stands in the way of his rescue. Among the circus-like events that are taking place at this time, Theagenes is selected to fight with a huge Ethiopian. He uses the opportunity to wonder what is going on with Kharikleia:

«Ἀλλὰ τίς ὁ τρόπος τῆς ἀγωνίας;» «Πάλης» εἶπεν ὁ Ὑδάσπης. Καὶ ὃς «Τί δὲ οὐχὶ καὶ ξιφῆρης καὶ ἔνοπλος, ἵνα τι ῥέξας ἢ παθὼν ἐκπλήσσω Χαρίκλειαν, τὴν σιωπᾶν εἰς δεῦρο τὰ καθ' ἡμᾶς καρτεροῦσαν, ἢ καὶ εἰς τέλος, ὥς ἔοικεν, ἡμῶν ἀπεγνωκυῖαν;»

‘But what will be the form of the contest?’ ‘Wrestling,’ said Hydaspes. And Theagenes, ‘Why not swords and arms, so that either doing something or suffering it I could shake up Kharikleia, who so far persists in silence about us, or else, as it seems, has forgotten us completely.’

(Heliod. *Aeth.* 10.31.1)

Of course, this persistent silence is not, as Theagenes fears, evidence that Kharikleia has forgotten him. It is, rather, emblematic of her virginity. For Kharikleia to make a public declaration of her relationship to Theagenes, despite the purity of their physical relationship thus far, would be to sacrifice the privacy of her erotic life. This much is made clear by Persinna herself, who suggests that, while the two of them are in the tent, a private revelation can be made without a violation of status:

Καὶ ἡ Περσίννα, πρόφασιν οὐ τὴν οὔσαν ἀλλ' ἐρωτικὴν ἄλλως ὑποτοπῆσασα,  
 «Οὐ δυνατόν μὲν» ἔφη «τὸ περισφύζειν· ὅμως δ' οὖν τίς σοι κοινωνία πρὸς τὸν  
 ἄνδρα δι' ἣν οὕτως ὑπερφροντίζεις θαρροῦσα ὡς πρὸς μητέρα λοιπὸν ἐξαγόρευε·  
 κἂν τι νεώτερον <ἦ> κίνημα κἂν παρθενία μὴ πρέπον, ἢ μητρῴα φύσις τὸ  
 θυγατρὸς καὶ τὸ θῆλυ συμπαθεῖς τὸ πταῖσμα τὸ γυναικεῖον οἶδεν ἐπισκιάζειν.»

And Persinna, not recognizing what it really was, but considering her excuse to be erotically motivated, said: 'It is not possible to save (Theagenes). Nevertheless, have confidence that you can tell your mother at least what connection there is between you and this man, because of which you are thus disturbed; and even if there is some improper passion which is not appropriate to your virginity, my maternal nature knows how to hide her daughter's error, and my female sympathy knows how to hide the womanly (wifely?) error.'

(Heliod. *Aeth.* 10.29.4)

Her assumption, then, is that there is something to hide, and she suggests an ambiguous revelation, a private revelation that will remain secret.<sup>89</sup> The complex syntax here is revealing: as a mother, she can hide her daughter's error, and her female sympathy allows her to hide a woman's error. The point is that Persinna does not know exactly what Kharikleia's status is, whether she is still her daughter, or has become a woman (which is to say, a wife); but in either case, either as mother or as fellow-woman, Persinna can keep Kharikleia's situation secret.<sup>90</sup> As Sissa remarks, '...the sexual activity of a *parthenos* ... in fact has a clearly defined limit – namely, its discovery, the revelation of its existence.'<sup>91</sup> Persinna, either as mother or woman, is promising to prevent that revelation and to keep that limit intact.

Now, the narrator reassures us that Persinna is wrong – he tells us that she does not recognize the real excuse, but thinks that Kharikleia is erotically motivated. We know the truth. But do we? What is the 'real excuse' (*prophasin tēn ousan*) hinted at (but not revealed) in the passage just above? When Persinna and Kharikleia burst out of the tent a few pages later, Persinna does the talking, and her revelation resolves all the difficulties of the plot without explicating the rift:

Ἡ Περσίννα καθ' ἕτερον μέρος τὸν Ὑδάσπην ἐνηγκαλίζετο, καὶ «Πάντα οὕτως ἔχειν, ἄνερ, πίστευε» πρὸς αὐτὸν ἔλεγε «καὶ νυμφίον εἶναι τοῦ θυγατρίου τὸν Ἑλληνα τουτονὶ νεανίαν ἀληθῶς γίνωσκε, ἄρτι μοι ταῦτα ἐκείνης καὶ μόλις ἐξαγορευσάσης.»

And Persinna on the other hand was holding Hydaspes and said to him, 'Believe everything to be thus, husband, and know that this young Greek is truly the bridegroom of your daughter, which just now she, with difficulty, explained to me.'

(Heliod. *Aeth.* 10.38.2)

Kharikleia explained the situation *molis*, 'with difficulty'. The word encapsulates the narrative situation. That Kharikleia had difficulty both marks her modesty, already heavily emphasized, and on a larger level, refers to the difficulty of explaining exactly what has happened. Indeed, it must be admitted that we still do not know – and that is the point. What went on in the tent is a secret, as it must be, as Persinna promised it would be, because it is that very silence that ensures Kharikleia's virginity, and that thereby fulfills our narrative desire.

My reader may think that at this point I am making too much of a mere point of silence in the text, but the narrator has maintained that silence repeatedly and craftily. As Winkler pointed out in another context, '...Heliodorus regularly manipulates points of view so as to contrast and highlight states of relative knowledge and ignorance.'<sup>92</sup> Nowhere is this more true than in the question of Kharikleia's state of sexual knowledge or innocence. In fact, while Persinna and Kharikleia are sequestered in the tent, the narrator deftly pulls our attention to other matters. One of them, a little joke, deserves our scrutiny. Initially, Hydaspes simply turns his attention – and ours – to the embassies that have arrived with various tributes. The passage that follows is a tour-de-force of description and exciting interwoven episodes. In one long passage, the narrator describes an amazing beast that has been brought forward, characterized by its long legs, unusual means of locomotion, and unbelievably long neck. The animal is marked by spots like a leopard's, and as a result, is finally named for us at the end of the paragraph: it is, we are told, a *cameleopard*. (10.27.1-4) The joke, dependent on the reader's ability to identify a giraffe, is instructive: just when we think we know what the narrator is going to say (i.e., 'the animal was called a giraffe'), he pulls the rug out from under us. At the same time, the giraffe is itself doing what the joke about its name does: just when we should be learning about Kharikleia's 'marriage,' we are pulled away to witness strange and remarkable animals.

The giraffe, in fact, leads to one of the major episodes that takes place while Kharikleia is in the tent, namely, two of the sacrificial bulls break loose, and are tracked down and wrestled to the ground by Theagenes in a neat bit of rodeo-riding. Watching this event from the tent, Kharikleia is moved to words and is, apparently, about to reveal the full truth to Persinna and to us. Watch, however, how neatly our attention is diverted just at the moment of public revelation:

Ἐπιδακρύσασα οὖν ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἡ Χαρίκλεια «Καὶ τοῦτο» ἔφη «δυστυχῶ πρὸς τοῖς ἄλλοις ὅτι καὶ τοῖς συνετοῖς ἀσύνετα φθέγγομαι καὶ λέγουσα τὰς ἑαυτῆς συμφορὰς οὐπὼ λέγειν νομίζομαι· πρὸς γυμνὴν δὲ λοιπὸν καὶ ἀπαρακάλυπτον χωρεῖν τὴν ἑμαυτῆς κατηγορίαν ἀναγκάζομαι.»  
Ταῦτα εἶπε, καὶ βουλομένη τὰ ὄντα ἀνακαλύπτειν αὐθις ἐξεκρούσθη βοῆς πολυηχεστάτης πρὸς τοῦ πλήθους ἀρθείσης.

‘And in this,’ Kharikleia said, ‘I am unfortunate in addition to the other ways, in that I speak words that are unintelligible even to intelligent people, and speaking of my own misfortunes I am thought not, somehow, to speak. I am forced at last to go through a naked and uncovered accusation of myself.’  
She said this, and wishing to uncover the truth, again she was frustrated as a very loud shout from the crowd was met.

(Helioid. *Aeth.* 10.29.5-10.30.1)

Now, the language that Kharikleia uses here is again quite suggestive. Her revelation will be naked (*gymnos*) and unveiled (*aparakalupton*). We might, I suppose, miss in this last word the reference to the *anakalupteria*, the moment of unveiling that takes place at some point during the Athenian wedding ceremony.<sup>93</sup> We cannot possibly miss it when she promises to ‘uncover (*anakaluptein*) the truth’ in the next sentence. Word choice here is being used to suggest that what is going to be revealed is, in fact, a marriage, and particularly that moment of marriage when the bride publicly reveals herself to her husband. At this point, however, we lose the revelation, as a shout is heard and the narrator’s attention turns to the action outside the tent. Nor is this an isolated event; on the contrary, this promise of truth revealed followed by quick diversion is paradigmatic of this section. An even more remarkable example takes place a little later:

Καὶ τῆς Περσίννης πολλὰ παρηγορήσεως καὶ «Εἰκὸς σωθῆναι τὸν νέον, εἴ μοι καὶ τὰ λειπόμενα καὶ σαφέστερα τῶν κατὰ σαντὴν ἐξαγορεύειν βούλοιο» λεγοῦσης, ἡ

μὲν Χαρίκλεια βιασθεῖσα καὶ τὸν καιρὸν οὐκ ἐνδιδόντα ὑπέρθεσιν ὀρῶσα, πρὸς  
τὰ καιριώτερα τῶν διηγημάτων ὥρμησεν.  
Ὁ δὲ Ὑδάσπης εἴ τινας ὑπολείπονται τῶν πρεσβευσάντων τοῦ εἰσαγγελέως  
ἐπυνθάνετο...

And Persinna trying to comfort her said, 'It is likely the young man could be saved, if you would wish to tell me more plainly the rest of the things concerning yourself.' And Kharikleia, being forced and seeing that the time did not allow delay, proceeded to the most relevant part of her story.

Meanwhile, Hydaspes was asking the herald if any of the embassies remained...

(Heliod. *Aeth.* 10.33.4-10.34.1)

Here, Kharikleia is evidently not interrupted – she does get to ‘the most relevant part of her story.’ But it will never reach our ears. Heliodorus moves the focus just at the critical moment back to Hydaspes, so that Kharikleia’s revelation, whatever it might be, remains both private and perfectly ambiguous.<sup>94</sup>

When, therefore, Persinna announces to her husband that Kharikleia and Theagenes really are married – whatever that means, in this context – it is a supreme moment of having one’s virginity and losing it too. The answer to the question that the text does not pose, namely, ‘What went on in the tent?’ is simply, ‘Move along folks; nothing to see here.’ Kharikleia’s virginal state has remained silent, protected by the physical enclosure of the tent and by Heliodorus’ sly narrative displacements. The point is not what is hidden, but the act of hiding itself.

Heliodorus, then, has come up with a novel solution to the problem of proving virginity. Virginity, as we have seen, is a thing which has no presence in itself, which can only fully and finally be proven by its loss. How, then, to narrate a non-event, the maintaining of virginity? Heliodorus achieves the impossible by simply refusing to narrate the non-event, by narrating instead the veiling of that non-event. We will never know if Kharikleia is a virgin or not; and it is the very fact of that final privacy that assures that she is, successfully, a virgin.

By successfully maintaining this dual status – a virgin and yet somehow married – Kharikleia is able to resolve both impediments to the plot at once, simultaneously maintaining her purity until marriage, and becoming, at the end of the story, already married to the man

would otherwise become a sacrificial victim. Indeed, her incredible marriage itself becomes a non-event, an always-already status, by Hydaspes' religious declaration:

«Οὐκοῦν, ὃ παρόντες» ἔλεγε, «θεῶν νεύματι τούτων οὕτω διαπεπραγμένων τὸ ἀντιβαίνειν ἀθέμιτον· ὥστε ὑπὸ μάρτυσιν αὐτοῖς τε τοῖς ταῦτα ἐπικλώσασι καὶ ὑμῖν ἀκόλουθα ἐκείνοις φρονεῖν ἐνδεικνυμένοις ξυνωρίδα ταύτην γαμηλίοις νόμοις ἀναδείκνυμι καὶ συνεῖναι θεσμῷ παιδογονίας ἐφίημι. Καὶ εἰ δοκεῖ, βεβαιούτω τὰ δόξαντα ἢ θυσία καὶ πρὸς τὰ ἱερὰ τρεπώμεθα.»

‘And so, you who are present,’ he said, ‘it would be unlawful to oppose the will of the Gods who brought these things about. Thus with both those Gods as witness who spun these destinies out, and with you who have shown your obedience to them, I declare that this is a couple according to the laws of marriage, and I allow them to be married in the divine right of childbirth. And if it seems right, let the sacrifice confirm this decision and let us turn to holy matters.’  
(Heliod. *Aeth.* 10.40.1-2)

Carefully and conspicuously glossed over in this declaration of a marriage that, so far as we know, never took place, is the fact that Theagenes is also, apparently, now to be spared from the sacrifice. The plot is resolved not so much because any of the questions it raised have been answered as because Kharikleia's father has declared it resolved.

This is not quite the final word, of course. After this resolution, Theagenes and Kharikleia actually perform the sacrifice of which they were previously to be the victims, and then the royal party rides chariots into the city of Meroe. They go by the light of torches, with flutes and pipes playing, both of which recall a wedding procession; and once there, we learn, τῶν ἐπὶ τῷ γάμῳ μυστικωτέρων κατὰ τὸ ἄστυ φαιδρότερον τελεσθησομένων (‘the more mysterious rites of marriage were completed in the city with greater splendor’, Heliod. *Aeth.* 10.41.3). What these ‘more mysterious’ rites were, we are left to guess – or rather, for those of us who have had the experience, we are left to know.

## CONCLUSIONS

These novels treat virginity in ways that are remarkable, even if not in exactly the manner, perhaps, that Foucault suggests. They do not simply champion a new form of erotics, in

which virginity is a mode of life, and which celebrates the institution of romantic marriage. Already in what is taken to be an early instance of the Romance, that championed virginity is being treated as a trope, and one that can be played with to the point of parody. For Achilles Tatius, the heroine's virginity becomes, as Goldhill suggests, an opportunity to question exactly what sort of a thing virginity is, and how it can be identified. What is presented as two parallel tests of women's virtue highlights, instead, the differences between them: one tries, truthfully, the heroine's true fidelity; the other tries, passively, an erotically charged wife's ability to avoid legal repercussions by means of a technicality. The hero himself, though vindicated, is slippery and sly rather than pure and chaste, better at preserving the heroine's virginity than his own. The ideal of the heroine's virginity is still elevated, but our knowledge exceeds the characters', and in so doing allows a knowing laughter at the convention.

Heliodorus' treatment takes the ambiguity of virginity to even greater heights. Although both hero and heroine are, if we accept the veracity of the magic gridiron, truly virgins, the plot is manipulated so that that virginity spells their apparent downfall. The narrator then arranges Kharikleia's status so that a supreme ambiguity is maintained. In the world of the novel, it is the sustaining of that ambiguity that matters: the silence promised by Persinna and ensured by the narrator's tricks both insures and represents the heroine's virginal status. Virginity only really exists once it has been lost; and the tent hides, and by hiding successfully replaces, the moment of that loss.

Anne Carson, whose reading of the novels remains among the most astute, projects the reader's desire onto the constantly frustrated desire of hero and heroine. That is, just as the hero and heroine both avidly desire sexual consummation and desire to prevent it, we as readers are carried along by the constant tension between our desire for the characters' successful union, and our desire for their continued sexual frustration. More than that: we desire a *heroine* who embodies that frustration, herself thereby ensuring the continuation and the success of the Romantic plot. Already at this early stage of the Romance, Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus have recognized the readers' desires for what they are, and fulfilled them in moments of sophistic



subversion. They have constructed virginity as a hall of mirrors, an always-receding image that both invokes and represents our insatiable desire for Romance.

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1. Text of Aesop is taken from B.E. Perry, *Aesopica* (Champaign, 1952).
  2. In Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*, both hero and heroine of the novel discover sexual experience as a form of education (see esp. 3.17-19). This aspect of the novel has been brilliantly discussed by J.J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York 1990), 101-126). Here, however, the promise of education is used rather callously by the man in order to enjoy sex with the young woman who remains fundamentally ignorant. I was reminded of this connection by Helen Morales.
  3. D. Selden, 'The Genre of Genre,' in *The Search for the Ancient Novel*, ed. J. Tatum. (Baltimore 1994), 39-64 discusses *syllipsis* as the defining trope of the Greek romances.
  4. Again, this is strikingly different from *Daphnis and Chloe*, where the experience of sex is described as bloody and painful for the woman (Long. *DC* 3.19); see especially Winkler (n.2 above), 121, 124-6.
  5. At times the word *parthenos* appears to refer to a social status, i.e., young and unmarried, rather than a state of experience. Sissa is correct, however, in arguing that being a *parthenos* was a 'sexual, not a sociological state'. G. Sissa, *Greek Virginity*, trans. A. Goldhammer, (Cambridge, Mass. 1990), 86. See further discussion below.
  6. See *LSJ*. The verb is used in just this sense at Herodotus 4.168, where the author is describing the bizarre marriage customs of the Libyans.
  7. M. Foucault (J) *The History of Sexuality, vol.iii: The Care of the Self*, trans. R. Hurley (New York 1986 [1984]), 228-32. Both D. Konstan, *Sexual Symmetry: Love in the Ancient Novel and Related Genres* (Princeton 1994) and S. Goldhill, *Foucault's Virginity: Ancient Erotic Fiction and the History of Sexuality* (Cambridge 1995) offer important modifications to Foucault's formulation, which I will discuss at some length. H. Morales, *Vision and Narrative in Achilles Tatius' Leucippe and Clitophon* (Cambridge 2004), 212-220 presents a brilliant analysis of Leukippe's paradoxical status as 'a virgin/whore, with one aspect overlaying the other' (quotation at 218).
  8. Foucault 1986 (n.7 above), 228.
  9. For the sake of clarity, when I am referring to Romance as a literary genre as opposed to the designation of an erotic sentiment between two lovers, I will capitalize the word. Though the word 'Romance' has become problematic in ancient novel studies, I find the formulation of Doody to be essentially correct: 'Romance and the Novel are one. The separation between them is part of a problem, not part of a solution.' M.A. Doody, *The True Story of the Novel* (New Brunswick 1996), 15.
  10. J.J. Winkler, 'The Invention of Romance,' in *The Search for the Ancient Novel*, ed. J. Tatum (Baltimore 1994 [1982]), 23-38 at 33.
  11. Winkler (n.10 above), 37.
  12. B. Egger, 'Women and Marriage in the Greek Novels: the Boundaries of Romance,' in *The Search for the Ancient Novel*, ed. J. Tatum (Baltimore 1994), 260-280 provides a clear discussion of the difficulty inherent in trying to read the novels as reflecting social reality. See esp. 268-71 on contemporary marriage laws. This is also treated well by K. Haynes, *Fashioning the Feminine in the Greek Novel* (New York 2003), 23-30.
  13. This observation is supported by the observations of Morales (n.7 above) regarding Achilles Tatius' use of various animals as analogues for his novel's heroine; see especially 193-6, 199.

14. We do not see virginity as a common theme in Greek love poetry until the Hellenistic period. The *Palatine Anthology* contains a number of poems in which the speaker urges his love-object to surrender her virginity, or in which he contemplates taking it from her: cf. *PA* 5.79, 5.85, 5.294.19-24. Some epitaphs have the speaker mention the loss of virginity: *PA* 7.164, 7.183. The daughters of Lycambes speak out against Archilochos' slanders against their virginity: *PA* 7.351.1-4, 7.352. Similarly, Philomela writes to Procne about Tereus' theft of her virginity and her voice, *PA* 9.452.1-5. Not all of these examples speak of virginity in specifically physical terms, though some do: *PA* 7.164.3-4, for example, the speaker says that her husband 'first untied the untouched knot of my virginity.'

15. D. Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus* (London 1955), 122, 122n.2.

16. Sissa (n.5 above), 73-86; See also Konstan (n.7 above), 156 n.38; N. Loraux, *The Children of Athena: Athenian Ideas about Citizenship and the Division Between the Sexes*, trans. C. Levine (Princeton 1993), 224-27, 224 n.183; L. Viitaniemi, 'Parthenia: Remarks on Virginity and its Meanings in the Religious Context of Ancient Greece', in *Aspects of Women in Antiquity*, eds. L.L. Lovén and A. Strömberg (Jonsö 1998) 44-57, at 49-51.

17. See discussion in Sissa (n.5 above), 100-101. Several other examples are discussed on 78-80.

18. Sissa (n. 5 above), 82-83.

19. Sissa (n.5 above), 105-23; contra see A. E. Hanson, 'The Medical Writers' woman', in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, eds. D.M. Halperin, J.J. Winkler, F.I. Zeitlin (Princeton 1990), 309-338 at 324-30. Goldhill (n.7 above) 116, 172 n.9 points out that some Christian texts speak of a physical integrity that may refer to the hymen. In some of the discussion that follows I will suggest that virginity is less a physical state than a personal one, that is, a state of innocence/ignorance.

20. Sissa (n.5 above), 355, Goldhill (n.7 above), 38. The relevant passage is Soranus 1.17.

21. Quoted and translated in Morales (n.7 above), 213. Morales's discussion of Achilles Tatius' novel as a fleshing out in narrative of these sorts of legal quandaries is instructive, 213f.

22. Viitaniemi (n.16 above) provides a brief but interesting discussion.

23. Sissa (n.5 above), 88.

24. Pregnancy is often the only sure sign of lost virginity, as Sissa notes: 'By swelling the belly of its mother or simply by appearing unexpectedly, the virgin's child becomes the unique sign of a truth that is otherwise impossible to grasp.' G. Sissa, 'Maidenhood without Maidenhead: The Female Body in Ancient Greece', in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, eds. D.M. Halperin, J.J. Winkler, F. Zeitlin (Princeton 1990) 339-364, at 348. See, e.g., Pausanias 4.9.6-8.

25. Sissa (n.5 above), 116-17: 'The difference between the Greeks and us therefore lies not in the contrast between a social status and a physical status...but in the value of a body as opposed to that of a sign.'

26. Doody (n.9 above), 72.

27. T. Hägg, *The Novel in Antiquity* (Berkeley 1983), 41-42. For a thorough discussion of the problems that arise in trying to determine the genre of these long prose works, see Selden (n.3 above).

28. Konstan (n.7 above), 55. See 48-55 for the fullest expression of this argument.

29. Morales (n.7 above), 83-4 points out that Thersander's critical stance here is one of a realist, and as such, a rejection of the novel's standard tropes. In this way, his desire to do violence to Leukippe is paralleled by his violence to the text itself: 'Thersander's reading of the world is just dangerous, striking at the very heart of the genre which contains him... The realist is a bully: to read with expectations of realism is to do violence to the text.'

30. See Goldhill (n.7 above), 118: 'From the first deferral of sex ... Achilles has both preserved Leucippe's virginity and repeatedly played with the idea of losing such physical integrity.' See Konstan (n.7 above), 53 n.53 for a brief discussion of this passage. He argues that what is paramount here is 'not so much the purity of her body as her pride in her free status...' but I have difficulty seeing this here.

31. Haynes (n.12 above), 58, 171 n.38. See also Morales (n.7 above), 200-201, 224. She points out (224) that Melite, in contrast to Leukippe, '...demonstrates a formidable command of language throughout the narrative'. Melite is, of course, also sexually experienced.

32. Morales (n.7 above), 216.

33. Winkler (n.10 above), 28.

34. A. Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet* (Princeton 1986), 81, '...the intention to consummate desire puts the lovers at odds with the novelist, whose novel will end unless he can subvert them.' See also M. Anderson 'The Sophrosyne of Persinna and the Romantic Strategy of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*, CPh 92 (1997), 303-22, at 311, 'By regulating the progress of love, chastity helps sustain the attention of the reader as the narrative progresses slowly towards its inevitable goal.' At the same time, as Whitmarsh points out, a contradictory desire pushes both characters and readers to the eventual satisfactory ending: 'This desire of the characters for sexual gratification mimics the reader's desire for narrative conclusion.' (T. Whitmarsh, 'Desire and the End of the Greek Novel', in *Plotting with Eros: Essays on the Poetics of Love and the Erotics of Reading*, ed. I. Nilsson (Copenhagen, 2009) 135-152, at 142.)

35. See Morgan's discussion of the narrowly-averted sacrifice of Kharikleia in Heliodorus *Aethiopika* 10.7: 'At one level the reader, for whom the hero and heroine are repositories of a value-system to which the novel as a whole has led him to subscribe, will be deeply dismayed by this serious and subtle threat to everything that is good... And yet at the same time, the reader, *as a reader*, is enjoying an exciting story and will welcome the prospect of further plot-complication, with its promise of thrills, suspense, and pleasure.' J.R. Morgan, 'Reader and Audiences in the *Aithiopika* of Heliodorus', in *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel*, vol. iv. (Groningen, 1991), 85-103, at 94. So D. Lateiner, 'Abduction marriage in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*, GRBS 38 (1997), 409-439, at 422 (speaking of Heliodorus): 'Here chastity means much more than the preservation of virginity: it is essential to the excitements of their travels, contact with pirates, incarceration, disguises, near-death, etc.'

36. Goldhill (n.7 above), 121. Emphasis in original.

37. Again, Morales (n.7 above), 193-6 is particularly sharp on the way that the figure of the phoenix at 3.25 figures as an analogue for Leukippe, submitting to a physical scrutiny that cannot be applied to the heroine.

38. Sissa (n.24 above), 343.

39. Sissa (n. 24 above), 347, 360. In this regard it is significant that Callirhoe in Chariton's novel becomes a woman (*gune* instead of *parthenos*) not when she has sex, but when she gives birth; cf. Ach. Tat *LK* 3.83 and H. Elsom, 'Callirhoe: Displaying the Phallic Woman,'

in *Pornography and Representation in Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. A. Richlin (New York 1992), 212-231, at 223.

40. See for example Hägg (n. 27 above), 81-108. Stephens and Bowie provide good summaries of previous scholarship on the historical readers of the novels. Both argue, in different ways, against the notions of the novels as 'popular' literature, and both argue against a primary female readership. S. Stephens, 'Who Read the Ancient Novels?' in *The Search for the Ancient Novel*, ed. J. Tatum (Baltimore 1994), 405-418; E. Bowie, 'The Readership of Greek Novels in the Ancient World,' in *The Search for the Ancient Novel*, ed. J. Tatum (Baltimore 1994), 435-459. Haynes (n.12 above), 9-17 also summarizes the arguments against female readers.

41. For an acute reading of the rise of domestic fiction, see N.A. Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York 1987). H. Montague, 'From Interlude in Arcady to Daphnis and Chloe: Two Thousand Years of Erotic Fantasy', in *The Search for the Ancient Novel*, ed. J. Tatum (Baltimore 1994) 391-401, at 392-3 lists a number of generic similarities between the ancient novels and modern Harlequins, but also admits that 'no argument about the ancient texts can be grounded in a discussion of the practices of specific readers' (392). Haynes (above n.12) 2-17, 75-7 provides a useful overview of the problem.

42. Haynes (above n.12), 60-1, 78-80. R. Balot, 'Foucault, Chariton, and the Masculine Self,' *Helios* 25 (1998), 139-62, at 155.

43. Doody (n.9 above), 18-26 (quotation from 24).

44. See Haynes (n.12 above), 75-7; Stephens (n.40 above), 405-6.

45. Stephens (n.40 above), 410-11, 415-16.

46. Stephens (n.40 above), 407, Bowie (n.40 above), 454 n.12.

47. Bowie (n.40 above), 438, 453.

48. See especially J. Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill, NC 1984).

49. L. Rabine, 'Romance in the age of electronics: Harlequin Enterprises,' in *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, eds. R. Warhol and D. Price Herndl (New Brunswick, NJ 1991 [1985]), 878-893, at 888-90.

50. Morales (n.7 above), 95. T. Whitmarsh, 'Reading for Pleasure: Narrative, Irony, and Eroticism in Achilles Tatius', in *The Ancient Novel and Beyond*, eds. S. Panayotakis, M. Zimmerman, W. Keulen (Leiden 2003), 191-206 similarly provides a narratological reading of Kleitophon and Kleinias as different types of readers of the novel form.

51. Winkler (above n.2), 127.

52. Morgan (above n.35) is particularly helpful in showing Heliodorus' various techniques for directing the external reader through the reactions of the internal narratees. As Morgan shows, Heliodorus does not rely on simple identification, or indeed on only one strategy. At times our reactions are allied with those of the internal listeners, and at other times we are meant to react in a manner opposite (Morgan's 'response by antithesis,' 102).

53. Winkler (above n.7), 111.

54. Winkler (above n.7), 111.

55. See especially Goldhill (n.7 above), 14: 'How stained, how dirtied, is the reader by an inability to read innocence innocently?'

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56. Bowie (above n.40), 436 points to several passages that suggest a masculine readership, including the 'long debate in Achilles Tatius 2.36-38 on the respective delights *for a male* of homosexual and heterosexual activity...' (emphasis in original).

57. Leucippe does defend her virginity to her mother at Ach. Tat. *LK* 2.25.

58. This discussion does not preclude the fact that the novels may strike modern female readers (and perhaps struck the ancient female readers as well) differently than they do men. As a vast body of feminist criticism points out, female readers are culturally situated differently than men, and sometimes identify differently with the characters and expect different resolutions than men do. This, however, takes us far from my present inquiry. Montague (above n.41) sees much that is admirable in Kharikleia, and argues for the recuperation of some of the ancient novels' heroines.

59. Konstan (n.7 above), 85 points out that the primary couple do not have premarital sex in any of the extant novels. Morales (n.7 above), 206 notes, 'Leucippe herself is only too willing to sleep with Clitophon for the first half of the narrative. Her subsequent refusal to do so is not due to a sincere change of heart or a sudden discovery of moral inhibitions, but because an external force, Artemis, who visits her in a dream, commands it (4.1.3-5).'

60. See especially Goldhill (n.7 above), 118; Morales (n.7 above), 156, 182.

61. Goldhill (n.7 above), 85-6.

62. Morales (n.7 above), 152f.

63. Carson (n.34 above) remains the best commentary on the role of the reader's desire for virginity and for the novelistic plot. See especially 78-81. Morales (n.7 above), 182-199 brilliantly explores different modes that the novel uses to manipulate the reader's desire for an investigation of Leucippe's integrity.

64. Goldhill (n.7 above), 94-8.

65. Foucault (n.7 above), 231. See the brief, but acute comments on this passage and Foucault's reading of it in T. Whitmarsh and H. Morales (trans. and intro.), *Achilles Tatius: Leucippe and Clitophon* (Oxford 2001), xxix-xxx.

66. Konstan (n.7 above), 53.

67. Similarly, Morales (n.7 above), 206f. discusses Melite's trickery in passing a test of fidelity later in the novel (Ach. Tat. *LK* 8.14) : 'The reader is at no stage invited to disapprove of the moral standards here displayed, an omission which encourages us instead to join the conspiracy (a conspiracy which excludes Leucippe) and appreciate its humour.'

68. Goldhill (n.7 above), 98. Goldhill provides here a brilliant analysis of the way that the verb 'to do philosophy' has slipped in meaning over the course of the past three books.

69. Sissa (n.24 above), 343.

70. This story is told as well in Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe* at 2.34; subsequently, hero and heroine enact the story in dance, with Daphnis playing the part of Pan, and Chloe that of Syrinx.

71. So also Morales (n.7 above), 216-18, on Leucippe as that pervasive male fantasy, the 'virgin/whore'.

72. Pace C. Segal, 'The trials at the End of Achilles Tatius' *Clitophon and Leucippe*. Doublets and Complementaries', *SIFC* 2 (1984), 83-91, at 87: 'Melite's victory...also serves to suggest a kind of purity for the hero...that is parallel to the actual virginity of the heroine.'

73. For full discussion of the structural similarities, see Segal (n. 72 above).

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74. For the competition between Artemis and Aphrodite, see E. Cueva, 'The Analogue of the Hero of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*,' *SyllClass* 9 (1998), 103-113. Cueva argues that Kleitophon's model in the novel is Hippolytos, whose story he manages to re-shape into successful form.

75. Winkler (n.10 above) remains for me the most persuasive reading of Heliodorus, showing the full range of Heliodorus' skill and playfulness as a narrator who both parodies and presents the Romantic plot. K. Dowden, 'Heliodoros: Serious Intentions,' *CQ* 46 (1996), 267-285 has called for a more serious reading of Heliodorus, one infused with 'authoritative statement and firm content' (quotation from 267).

76. Foucault (n.7 above) 230.

77. See especially M. Foucault *The History of Sexuality, vol. ii: The Use of Pleasure*, trans. R. Hurley (New York 1985), 63-77.

78. See especially Dowden (n.75 above); also G. Anderson, *Eros Sophistes: Ancient Novelists at Play* (Chico, CA 1982), 33: 'He is certainly committed to the heroine's chastity, which in this case is positively scintillating.'

79. Lateiner (n.35 above), 429 seems to think that the gridiron will kill those who are not virgins who stand on it. But at 10.8 the risk seems only to involve burned feet and perhaps injury.

80. This suggestion of a ruse, made in this offhand manner, should give us pause. Mary Bachvarova points out in correspondence that Kharikleia may be protected from the gridiron by her *pantarbe* stone, one of the signs given to her by her mother when she was abandoned. Although the stone apparently did save Kharikleia from actual fire in book 8, its magic powers are not brought up in this passage. Still, are we meant to remember it here? Is she really a virgin, or is it just that she carries a magical jewel? As M. Anderson (n.34 above), 313 points out, the stone is constructed by the text of the ribbon that accompanies it as parallel to Kharikleia's virginity. Both are 'precious treasure[s],' and both seem to be working together to protect Kharikleia from burning. Perhaps we should think of the *pantarbe* stone as the physical embodiment of Persinna's advice, which Kharikleia has sometimes unknowingly followed.

81. Carson (n.34 above), 85.

82. M. Anderson (n.34 above), 318-21 explores the implications of the story of Andromeda.

83. See the useful discussion of M. Anderson (n.34 above), 310-22.

84. M. Anderson (n.34 above), 313.

85. See Lateiner (n.35 above), 430-7 for a helpful discussion of Kharikleia's ambiguous status. Lateiner sees Kharikleia as a savvy manipulator of her virginity and its significance; see esp. 433.

86. See C. Patterson, 'Those Athenian Bastards,' *CA* 9 (1990), 40-73 for a full discussion.

87. Cf. LSJ II.1. and II.2.

88. We should recall Leukippe here, who was unashamed to speak directly to her father once her virginity was clearly established (Ach. Tat. *LK* 8.15). Cf. Segal (n.72 above), 89.

89. Haynes (n.12 above), 118 reads this passage as an example of Persinna's inability to understand Kharikleia's emotional state. Kharikleia's status, however, is far from clear, and I prefer to see this scene as a deliberate rift in the text, in which Persinna and Kharikleia will come to understand each other, but in a way that is not on display to the external reader.

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90. See Anderson (n.34 above), 316-18 for a discussion of Persinna's exemplary tact when it comes to discussing sexual matters.

91. Sissa (n.24 above), 347.

92. Winkler (n.7 above), 95.

93. Exactly when in the ceremony the *anakalupteria* took place is a matter of some debate. For discussion, see Sissa (n. 5 above), 93-9; J. Oakley and R. Sinos, *The Wedding in Ancient Athens* (Madison, WI 1993), 25-6.

94. Morgan (n.35 above), 91-2 points out that in this scene, 'The narrative is continually interrupted to inform us of the crowd's reaction to what is happening.' Morgan argues that this technique functions to ally our response to that of the crowd. While I agree, I also want to emphasize that our ignorance is also forced to parallel that of the crowd; neither they nor we see inside the tent.